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ALEC FORBES OF HOWGLEN.

BY

GEORGE MAC DONALD M.A.

AUTHOR OF

“DAVID ELGINBROD,” “ADELA CATHCART”

&c., &c.

* * * * a faith sincere
Drawn from the wisdom that begins with fear.
WORDSWORTH.—*Second Evening Voluntary.*

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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ALEC FORBES OF HOWGLEN.

CHAPTER I.

AS it happened, no one but Alec had come up from Glamerton that year. He did not know one of his fellow-students. There were very few in the first class indeed, who had had any previous acquaintance with each other. But before three days were over, like had begun to draw to like, and opposites to their natural opposites. These mutual attractions, however, were considerably influenced by the social sphere, as indicated by style of dress, speech, and manners, in which each had been accustomed to move. Some of the youths were of the lowliest origin—the sons of ploughmen and small country shopkeepers; shock-headed lads, with much of the looks and manners of year-old bullocks, mostly with freckled faces and a certain general irre-

sponsiveness of feature, soon to vanish as the mental and nervous motions became more frequent and rapid, working the stiff clay of their faces into a readier obedience to the indwelling plasticity. Some, on the other hand, showed themselves at once the aristocracy of the class, by their carriage and social qualifications or assumptions. These were not generally the best scholars; but they set the fashion in the cut of their coats, and especially in the style of their neckerchiefs. Most of them were of Highland families; some of them jolly, hearty fellows; others affected and presumptuous, evidently considering it beneath them to associate with the multitude.

Alec belonged to a middle class. Well-dressed, he yet knew that his clothes had a country air, and that beside some of the men he cut a poor figure in more than in this particular. For a certain superiority of manner distinguished them, indicating that they had been accustomed to more of the outward refinements of life than he. Now let Alec once feel that a man was wiser and better than himself, and he was straightway incapable of envying him any additional superiority possible—would, in a word, be perfectly willing that he should both wear a better coat, and be a better scholar than himself. But to any one who did not possess the higher kind of superiority, he foolishly and

enviously grudged the lower kinds of pre-eminence. To understand this it must be remembered, that as yet he had deduced for himself no principles of action or feeling: he was only a boy well-made, with little goodness that he had in any way verified for himself.

On the second day after the commencement of lectures, it was made known to the first class that the Magstrand (*fourth-class*) Debating Society would meet that evening. The meetings of this society, although under the control of the magstrands, were open, upon equal terms in most other respects, to the members of the inferior classes. They were held in the Natural Philosophy class-room, at seven o'clock in the evening; and to the first meeting of the session Alec went with no little curiosity and expectation.

It was already dark when he set out from his lodgings in the new town, for the gateway beneath the tower with that crown of stone which is the glory of the ancient borough gathered beneath it. Through narrow crooked streets, with many dark courts on each side, he came to the open road which connected the two towns. It was a starry night, dusky rather than dark, and full of the long sound of the distant sea-waves falling on the shore beyond the *links*. He was striding along whistling, and thinking about as nearly nothing as might be,

when the figure of a man, whose footsteps he had heard coming through the gloom, suddenly darkened before him and stopped. It was a little spare, slouching figure, but what the face was like, he could not see.

"Whustlin'?" said the man, interrogatively.

"Ay; what for no?" answered Alec checrily.

"Haud yer een aff o' rainbows, or ye'll brak' yer shins upo' gravestanes," said the man, and went on, with a shuffling gait, his eyes flashing on Alec, from under projecting brows, as he passed.

Alec concluded him drunk, although drink would not altogether account for the strangeness of the address, and soon forgot him. The arch echoed to his feet as he entered the dark quadrangle, across which a glimmer in the opposite tower guided him to the stairs leading up to the place of meeting. He found the large room lighted by a chandelier, and one of the students seated as president in the professor's chair, while the benches were occupied by about two hundred students, most of the freshmen or *bejans* in their red gowns.

Various preliminary matters were discussed with an energy of utterance, and a fitness of speech, which would have put to shame the general elocution of both the pulpit and the bar. At length,

however, a certain *semi* (second-classman, or more popularly *sheep*) stood up to give his opinion on some subject in dispute, and attempting to speak too soon after his dinner, for he was one of the more fashionable order, hemmed and stammered till the weariness of the assembly burst upon him in a perfect torrent of hisses and other animal exclamations. Among the loudest in this inarticulate protestation, were some of the red-gowned bejans, and the speaker kindled with wrath at the presumption of the yellow-beaks (*becs jaunes : bejans*), till, indignation bursting open the barriers of utterance, he poured forth a torrent of sarcastic contempt on the young clod-hoppers, who, having just come from herding their father's cows, could express their feelings in no more suitable language than that of the bovine animals which had been their principal and fit associates. As he sat down, his eyes rested with withering scorn upon Alec Forbes, who instantly started to his feet amidst a confusion of plaudits and hisses, but, finding it absolutely impossible to speak so as to be heard, contented himself with uttering a sonorous *ba-a-a-a*, and instantly dropped into his seat, all the other outcries dissolving in shouts of laughter. In a moment he received a candle full in the face; its companions went flying in all directions, and the room was in utter darkness. A scramble for the

door followed; and amidst struggling, shouting, and swearing, the whole company rolled down the stair into the quadrangle, most of them without their caps, and some with their new gowns torn from bottom to top. The night was hideous with the uproar. In the descent, Alec received a blow on the head which half stunned him; but he did not imagine that its severity was other than an accident of the crush. He made the best of his way home, and went to bed.

After this he was popular; and after this, as often as Patrick Beauchamp and he passed each other in walking up and down the arcade, Beauchamp's high curved upper lip would curve yet higher, and Alec would feel with annoyance that he could not sustain the glance of his gray eyes.

Beauchamp was no great favourite even in his own set; for there is one kind of religion in which the more devoted a man is, the fewer proselytes he makes: the worship of himself.

CHAPTER II.

ONE morning, about two months from the beginning of the session, after the students had been reading for some time in the Greek class, the professor was seen, not unexpectedly to part of the assembly, to look up at the ceiling with sudden discomposure. There had been a heavy fall of snow in the night, and one of the students, whose organ of humour had gained at the expense of that of veneration, had, before the arrival of the professor, gathered a ball of the snow, and thrown it against the ceiling with such forceful precision, that it stuck right over the centre of the chair. This was perhaps the first time that such a trick had been dared in the first class, belonging more properly to the advanced depravity of the second or third. When the air began to get warm, the snow began to drop upon the head of the old professor; and this was the cause of his troubled glance at the ceiling. But the moment he looked

up, Alec, seeing what was the matter, and feeling all his natural loyalty roused, sprang from his seat, and rushing out of the class-room, returned with a long broom which the sacrist had been using to clear foot-paths across the quadrangle. The professor left his chair, and Alec springing on the desk, swept the snow from the ceiling. He then wiped the seat with his handkerchief and returned to his place. The gratitude of the old man shone in his eyes. True, he would only have had to send for the sacrist to rescue him ; but here was an atonement for the insult, offered by one of the students themselves.

“Thank you, Mr. Forbes,” he stammered ; “I am ek—ek—ek—exceedingly obliged to you.”

The professor was a curious, kindly little man—lame, with a brown wig, a wrinkled face, and a long mouth, of which he only made use of the half on the right side to stammer out humorous and often witty sayings—at least so they appeared to those who had grace enough to respect his position and his age. As often as reference is made in my hearing to Charles Lamb and his stutter, up comes the face of dear old Professor Fraser, and I hear him once more stammering out some joke, the very fun of which had its source in kindness. Somehow the stutter never interfered with the point of the joke : that always came with

a rush. He seemed, while hesitating on some unimportant syllable, to be arranging what was to follow and strike the blow.

“Gentlemen,” he continued upon this occasion, “the scripture says you’re to heap c-c-c-coals of fire on your enemy’s head. When you are to heap drops of water on your friend’s w-w-wig, the scripture doesn’t say.”

The same evening Alec received a note from him asking him to breakfast with him the following morning, which was Saturday, and consequently a holiday. It was usual with the professors to invite a dozen or so of the students to breakfast on Saturdays, but on this occasion Alec was the sole guest.

As soon as he entered the room, Mr. Fraser hobbled to meet him, with outstretched hand of welcome, and a kindly grin on his face.

“Mr. Forbes,” he said, “I h-h-hope well of you ; for you can respect an old man. I’m very glad to see you. I hope you’ve brought an appetite with you. Sit down. Always respect old age, Mr. Forbes. You’ll be old yourself some day—and you won’t like it any more than I do. I’ve had my young days, though, and I mustn’t grumble.”

And here he smiled ; but it was a sad smile, and a tear gathered in the corner of one of his old eyes.

He caught up a globular silver tea-pot, and began to fill the tea-cups. Apparently the reflection of his own face in the tea-pot was too comical to resist, for the old man presently broke into what was half a laugh and half a grin, and, without in any way accounting for it, went on talking quite merrily for the rest of the meal.

"My mother told me," said Alec at length, "in a letter I had from her yesterday, that your brother, sir, had married a cousin of hers."

"What! what! Are you a son of Mr. Forbes of Howglen?"

"Yes, sir."

"You young rascal! Why didn't your mother send you to me?"

"She didn't like to trouble you, I suppose, sir."

"People like me that haven't any relations, must make the most of the relations they have. I am in no danger of being troubled that way. You've heard of my poor brother's death?"

"No, sir."

"He died last year. He was a clergyman, you know. When you come up next session, I hope to show you his daughter—your cousin, you know. She is coming to live with me. People that don't marry don't deserve to have children. But I'm going to have one after all. She's at school

now. What do you think of turning to, Mr. Forbes?"

"I haven't thought much about it yet, sir."

"Ah! I daresay not. If I were you, I would be a doctor. If you're honest, you're sure to do some good. I think you're just the man for a doctor now—you respect your fellow-men. You don't laugh at old age, Mr. Forbes."

And so the kind garrulous old man went on, talking about everything except Greek. For that he had no enthusiasm. Indeed, he did not know enough to have, by possibility, any feeling about it. What he did know, however, he taught well, and very conscientiously.

This was the first time that Alec's thoughts had been turned towards a profession. The more he thought about it, the better he liked the idea of being a doctor; till at length, after one or two talks about it with Mr. Fraser, he resolved, notwithstanding that the session was considerably advanced, to attend the anatomical course for the rest of it. The Greek and Latin were tolerably easy to him, and it would be so much time gained if he entered the first medical class at once. He need not stand the examination except he liked, and the fee was not by any means large. His mother was more than satisfied with the proposal, and, although what seemed a trifle to Alec was of some consequence to

her, she sent him at once the necessary supplies. Mr. Fraser smoothed the way for him with the professor, and he was soon busy making up his distance by a close study of the class-books.

CHAPTER III.

THE first day of his attendance in the dissecting-room was a memorable one, and had memorable consequences. He had considerable misgivings about the new experience he had to meet, and sought, by the concentration of his will, to prepare himself to encounter the inevitable with calmness, and, if possible, with seeming indifference. But he was not prepared after all for the disadvantage of entering a company already hardened to those peculiarities of the position for which a certain induration is as desirable as unavoidable.

When he entered the room, he found a group already gathered. He drew timidly towards the table on the other side, not daring to glance at something which lay upon it—"white with the whiteness of what is dead;" and, feeling as if all the men were looking at him, as indeed most of them were, kept staring, or trying to stare at other things in the room. But all at once, from

an irresistible impulse, he faced round, and looked at the table.

There lay the body of a woman, with a young sad face, beautiful in spite of a terrible scar on the forehead, which indicated too plainly with what brutal companions she had consorted. Alec's lip quivered, and his throat swelled with a painful sensation of choking. He turned away, and bit his lip hard to keep down his emotion.

The best quality he possessed was an entire and profound reverence for women. Indignation even was almost quelled in the shock he received, when one of the students, for the pleasure of sneering at his discomposure, and making a boast of his own superiority to such weakness, uttered a brutal jest. In vain the upturned face made its white appeal to the universe: a laugh billowed the silence about its head.

But no rudeness could hurt that motionless heart—no insult bring a blush on that pale face. The closed eyes, the abandoned hands seemed only to pray:

“Let me into the dark—out of the eyes of those men!”

Alec gave one sob in the vain effort to master the conflicting emotions of indignation and pity. It reverberated in the laugh which burst from the students of the healing art. Almost quenched in

the laugh he heard one word however, in the same voice which had made the jest—a voice he knew well enough—that of Patrick Beauchamp. His face blazed up; his eyes flashed; and he had made one step forward, when he was arrested by the still face of the dead woman, which, ghostly as the morning moon, returned no glow in the red sunlight of his wrath; and in reverence he restrained his anger. In another moment, the professor arrived.

During the lecture and accompanying demonstrations, Alec was deaf and blind from burning rage; in the midst of which, however, he almost forgot his own wrong in regarding that done to the dead. He became, in his own eyes, the champion of one whom nature and death had united to render defenceless. From the verge of a gulf more terrible than the grave, her cry had reached him, and he would rise to avenge her.

As soon as they came out, he walked up to Beauchamp.

“You called me a spoony,” he said through his set teeth.

“I did,” answered Beauchamp, with an admirable drawl of indifference.

Alec replied with a blow; whereupon Beauchamp knocked him down. But he was up in a moment; and, although his antagonist was both older and bigger, the elasticity of his perfect health soon

began to tell. There was little science between them, and what there was lay on Beauchamp's side; yet he defended himself more and more feebly, for his wind had soon given way. At length, after receiving a terrible blow on the mouth, Beauchamp dropped his arms and turned his back; and Alec, after some hesitation, let him go without the parting kick which he was tempted to give him, and which he had so well deserved.

The men dispersed without remark, ashamed of themselves, and admiring the bumpkin—most of them were gentlemen enough for that; while each of the combatants retired unaccompanied to his own lodging—Alec with a black eye, which soon passed through yellow back to its own natural hue, and Beauchamp with a cut, the scar of which deepened the sneer on his upper lip, and was long his evil counsellor from the confessional of the mirror.

CHAPTER IV.

THE encounter fortunately took place upon a Friday, so that the combatants had both Saturday and Sunday, with the deodand of a slight fine for being absent from chapel, to recover appearances. Alec kept to the house both days, and read hard at his medical and anatomical books. His landlady took charge of his eye, and ministered to it with assiduity and discretion, asking no questions, and courting no confidences, only looking at him comically now and then out of gray motherly eyes, that might have been trusted with the universe. She knew the ways of students. In the course of one of the dressings, she said,

“Ye ’ll be thinkin’ lang (*ennuyé*), Mr. Forbes, at haein’ to bide i’ the hoose wi’ that blackamoor-ée o’ yours. Hoo dinna ye gang up the stair to Mr. Cupples, and hae a lauch wi’ him?”

“I didna ken ye had onybody up the stair. Wha’s Mr. Cupples?”

“Weel, he kens that best himsel! But he’s a gey queer ane. He’s a terrible scholar though, fowk says—gran’ at the Greek, and rael bonny on the mathewmawtics. Only ye maunna be fleyt (*frightened*) at him.”

“I’m easy fleyt,” said Alec, with a laugh. “But I wad like to see him.”

“Gang up, than, and chap at the garret door upo’ yer left han’.”

“But what reason am I to gie him for disturbin’ him?” asked Alec.

“Ow nane ava. Jist tak a moufu’ o’ Greek wi’ ye to speir the richt meanin’ o’, gin ye maun hae a rizzon.”

“That will do just first-rate,” said Alec; “for here I have been puzzling over a sentence for the last half hour with nobody but this dim-sighted ghost of a Schrevelius to help me out with it. I’ll go directly. But I look such a blackguard with this game eye!”

The landlady laughed.

“You’ll sune forget that whan ye see Mr. Cupples.”

To the dismay of his nurse, Alec pulled the bandage off his eye, and amidst hier expostulations caught up his book, and rushing away, bounded up the garret stairs, which ascended outside the door of the *flat*. At the top, he found himself

under the bare roof, with only boards and slates between him and the clouds. The landing was lighted by a skylight, across which diligent and undisturbed spiders had woven their webs for years. He stood for a moment or two, puzzled as to which door he ought to assail, for all the doors about looked like closet-doors, leading into dingy recesses. At last, with the aid of his nose, he made up his mind, and knocked.

“Come in,” cried a voice of peculiar tone. It reminded Alec of something he could not at all identify, which was not wonderful, seeing it was of itself, heard once before, that it reminded him. It was the same voice which, as he walked to the debate, the first night, had warned him not to look at rainbows.

He opened the door and entered.

“What do you want?” said the voice, its source almost invisible in the thick fumes of genuine pigtail, through which it sent cross odours of as genuine Glenlivet.

“I want you to help me with a bit of Homer, if you please, Mr. Cupples.—I’m not up to Homer yet.”

“Do ye think I hae naething ither to do than to grin’ the grandur o’ an auld haythen into spunemate for a young sinner like you?”

“Ye dinna ken what I’m like, Mr. Cupples,”

returned Alec, remembering his landlady's injunction not to be afraid of him.

"Come athort the reek, and lat 's luik at ye."

Alec obeyed, and found the speaker seated by the side of a little fire, in an old easy-chair covered with horsehair ; and while undergoing his scrutiny, took his revenge in kind. Mr. Cupples was a man who might have been of almost any age from five-and-twenty to fifty—at least, Alec's experience was insufficient for the task of determining to what decade of human years he belonged. He was a little man, in a long black tail-coat much too large, and dirty gray trousers. He had no shirt-collar visible, although a loose rusty stock revealed the whole of his brown neck. His hair, long, thin, fair, and yet a good deal mingled with grey, straggled about over an uncommonly high forehead, which had somehow the neglected and ruinous look of an old bare tower no ivy had beautified. His ears stood far out from his great head. His nose refuses to be described. His lips were plentiful and loose ; his chin was not worth mentioning ; his eyes were rather large, beautifully formed, bright, and blue. His hand, small, delicately shaped, and dirty, grasped, all the time he was examining Alec, a tumbler of steaming toddy ; while his feet, in list slippers of different colours, balanced themselves upon the fender.

"You've been fighting, you young rascal!" said Mr. Cupples, in a tone of authority, the moment he had satisfied himself about Alec's countenance.

"That won't do. It's not respectable."

And he gave the queerest unintelligible grin.

Alec found himself strangely attracted to him, and impelled—a feeling not unfrequent with him—to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

"The world itself is n't the most respectable planet in the system, Mr. Cupples," said he; "and no honest inhabitant of it can be always respectable either."

Mr. Cupples chuckled and laughed groggily, muttering somewhere in his chest—

"You young dog! there's stuff in you!" Then composing himself a little, he said aloud: "Tell me all about it directly."

Alec obeyed, and, not without emotion, gave Mr. Cupples the whole history of the affair.

"Damn you!" remarked Mr. Cupples in a husky voice, as he held out a trembling hand to Alec, "you're one of the right sort. I'll do anything for you I can. Where's your Homer?"

So saying, he rose with care and went towards a cupboard in the corner. His pipe had been so far interrupted during their conversation, that Alec was now able, by the light of the tallow candle, to

see the little garret room, with its ceiling on one side sloping nearly to the floor, its walls begrimed with smoke, and the bare plaster covered with grotesque pencil-drawings—caricatures of Homeric heroes in the guise of schoolboys, polemic clergymen of the city in the garb of fish-wives militant, and such like. A bed and a small chest of drawers stood under the slope of the roof, and the rest of the room was occupied by a painted table covered with papers, and a chair or two. An old broadsword leaned against the wall in a corner. A half-open cupboard revealed bottles, glasses, and a dry-looking cheese. To the corresponding cupboard, on the other side of the fire, which had lost a corner by the descent of the roof, Mr. Cupples now dragged his slippers, feeling in his waistcoat pocket, as he went, for the key.—There was another door still, partly sunk in the slope of the ceiling.

When he opened the cupboard, a dusky glimmer of splendid bindings filling the whole recess, shone out upon the dingy room. From a shelf he took a volume of Homer, bound in vellum, with red edges—a copy of far greater value than Alec had knowledge of books to understand—and closing the door again, resumed his seat in the easy chair. Having found the passage, he read it through aloud in a manner which made Homer for the first time sound like poetry in Alec's ears, and almost re-

vealed the hidden significance. Then pouncing at once upon the shadowy word which was the key to the whole, he laid open the construction and meaning in one sentence of explanation.

“Thank you! thank you!” exclaimed Alec. “I see it all now as plain as English.”

“Stop, stop, my young bantam!” said Mr. Cupples. “Do n’t think you’re going to break into my privacy and get off with the booty so cheaply. Just you construe the whole sentence to me.”

Alec did so tolerably well; for the passage was only an easy extract, the class not having reached Homer yet. Mr. Cupples put several questions to him, which gave him more insight into Greek than a week’s work in the class would have done, and ended with a small lecture suggested by the passage, drinking away at his toddy all the time. The lecture and the toddy ended together. Turning his head aside, where it lay back in the horse-hair chair, he said sleepily :

“Go away—I do n’t know your name.—Come and see me to-morrow night. I’m drunk now.”

Alec rose, made some attempt at thanks, received no syllable of reply, and went out, closing the door behind him, and leaving Mr. Cupples to his dreams.

His countenance had not made much approxi-

mation to respectability before the Monday. He therefore kept it as well as he could out of Mr. Fraser's sight, to whom he did not wish to give explanations to the prejudice of any of his fellow-students. Mr. Fraser, however, saw his black eye well enough, but was too discreet to ask questions, and appeared quite unaware of the transitory blemish.

CHAPTER V.

MEANTIME, at Glamerton the winter passed very much like former winters to all but three—Mrs. Forbes, Annie Anderson, and Willie Macwha. To these the loss of Alec was dreary. So they were in a manner compelled to draw closer together. At school, Curly assumed the protectorship of Annie which had naturally devolved upon him, although there was now comparatively little occasion for it exercise; and Mrs. Forbes, finding herself lonely in her parlour during the long *forenights*, got into the habit of sending Mary at least three times a week to fetch her. This was not agreeable to the Bruce, but the kingly inheritor abode his hour; and Mrs. Forbes had no notion of the amount of offence she gave by doing so.

That parlour at Howglen was to Annie a little heaven hollowed out of the winter. The warm curtains drawn, and the fire blazing defiantly, —the angel with the flaming sword to protect

their Paradise from the frost, it was indeed a contrast to the sordid shop, and the rat-haunted garret.

After tea they took it in turns to work and to read. Mrs. Forbes had never sought to satisfy the religious public as to the state of her mind, and so had never been led astray into making frantic efforts to rouse her own feelings ; which is, in fact, to apply to them the hottest searing iron of all, next to that of sin. Hence her emotional touch remained delicate, and what she could understand, she could feel. The good books she liked best were stories of the Scotch Covenanters and Worthies, whose example, however much of stiff-neckedness may have mingled with their devotion, was yet the best that Annie could have, inasmuch as they were simply martyrs—men who would not say *yes* when they ought to say *no*. Nor was Mrs. Forbes too religious to enjoy the representation given of these Covenanters in *Old Mortality*. Her feelings found nothing repulsive in the book, although she never discovered the reason in the fact that Sir Walter's feelings were the same as her own, whatever his opinions might be, and had given the chief colour and tone to the representation of his characters. There were more books in the house than was usual even in that of a *gentleman farmer* ; and several of Sir Walter's novels,

besides some travels, and a little Scotch history, were read between them that winter. In poetry, Annie had to forage for herself. Mrs. Forbes could lend her no guiding hand in that direction.

The bond between them grew stronger every day. Annie was to Mrs. Forbes an outlet for her maternity, which could never have outlet enough without a girl as well as a boy to love; and Annie, in consequence, was surrounded by numberless holy influences, which, operating in a time when she was growing fast, had their full effect upon mind and body both. In a condition of rapid change, the mass is more yielding and responsive. One result in her was, that a certain sober grace, like that of the lovely dull-feathered hen-birds, began to manifest itself in her carriage and her ways. And this leads me to remark that her outward and visible feathers would have been dull enough had not Mrs. Forbes come to her aid with dresses of her own, which they remade between them; for it will easily be believed that no avoidable outlay remained unavoidsed by the Bruces. Indeed, but for the feeling that she must be decent on Sundays, they would have let her go yet shabbier than she was when Mrs. Forbes thus partially adopted her. Now that she was warmly and neatly dressed, she began to feel and look more like the lady-child she

really was. No doubt the contrast was very painful when she returned from Mrs. Forbes's warm parlour to sleep in her own garret, with the snow on the roof, scanty clothing on the bed, and the rats in the floor. But there are two sides to a contrast; and it is wonderful also how one gets through what one cannot get out of.

A certain change in the Bruce-habits, leading to important results for Annie, must now be recorded.

Robert Bruce was making money, but not so fast as he wished. For his returns came only in small sums, although the profits were great. His customers were chiefly of the poorer classes of the town and the neighbourhood, who preferred his unpretending shop to the more showy establishments of some of his rivals. A sort of *couthy*, *pauky*, confidentially flattering way that he had with them, pleased them, and contributed greatly to keep them true to his counter. And as he knew how to buy as well as how to sell, the poor people, if they had not the worth of their money, had at least what was good of its sort. But, as I have said, although he was making haste to be rich, he was not succeeding fast enough. So he bethought him that the Missionar Kirk was getting "verra throng."

A month or two before this time, the Missionars

had made choice of a very able man for their pastor—a man of genuine and strong religious feeling, who did not allow his theology to interfere with the teaching given him by God's Spirit more than he could help, and who, if he had been capable of making a party at all, would have made it with the poor against the rich. This man had gathered about him a large congregation of the lower classes of Glamerton; and Bruce had learned with some uneasiness that a considerable portion of his customers was to be found in the Missionar Kirk on Sundays, especially in the evenings. For there was a grocer amongst the Missionars, who, he feared, might draw some of his subjects away from their allegiance, seeing he must have a certain religious influence of which Robert was void, to bring to bear upon them. What therefore remained but that he too should join the congregation? For then he would not only retain the old, but have a chance of gaining new customers as well. So he took a week to think about it, a Sunday to hear Mr. Turnbull in order that the change might not seem too abrupt, and a pew under the gallery before the next Sunday arrived; in which, five minutes before the hour, he and his family were seated, adding greatly to the consequence both of the place and of himself in the eyes of his Missionar customers.

This change was a source of much pleasure to Annie. For although she found the service more wearisome than good Mr. Cowie's, lasting as it did about three quarters of an hour longer, and the sermon was not invariably of a kind in which she could feel much interest, yet, occasionally, when Mr. Turnbull was in his better moods, and testified of that which he had himself seen and known, the honest heart of the maiden recognized the truth, and listened absorbed. The young Bruces, for their parts, would gladly have gone to sleep, which would perhaps have been the most profitable use to which they could put the time; but they were kept upright and in a measure awake, by the constant application, "spikewise," of the paternal elbow, and the judicious administration, on the part of the mother, of the unfailing peppermint lozenges, to which in the process of ages a certain sabbatical character has attached itself. To Annie, however, no such ministration extended, for it would have been downright waste, seeing she could keep awake without it.

One bright frosty morning, the sermon happening to have no relation to the light around or within them, but only to the covenant made with Abraham—such a legal document constituting the only reliable protection against the character, inclinations, and duties of the Almighty, whose un-

covenanted mercies are of a very doubtful nature—Annie, neither able to enter into the subject, nor to keep from shivering with the cold, tried to amuse herself with gazing at one brilliant sunstreak on the wall, which she had discovered to be gradually shortening itself, and retreating towards the window by which it had entered. Wondering how far it would have moved before the sermon was over, and whether it would have shone so very bright if God had made no covenant with Abraham, she was earnestly watching it pass from spot to spot, and from cobweb to cobweb, as if already it fled before the coming darkness of the long winter night, when she caught a glimpse of a very peculiar countenance turned in the same direction—that is, not towards the minister, but towards this travelling light. She thought the woman was watching it as well as she, and wondered whether she too was hoping for a plate of hot broth as soon as the sunbeam had gone a certain distance—broth being the Sunday fare with the Bruces—and, I presume, with most families in Scotland. The countenance was very plain, seamed and scarred as if the woman had fallen into the fire when a child; and Annie had not looked at her two seconds, before she saw that she was perfectly blind. Indeed she thought at first that she had no eyes at all; but as she kept gazing, fascinated with the strangeness

and ugliness of the face, she discovered that the eyelids, though incapable of separating, were in constant motion, and that a shrunken eye-ball underneath each kept rolling and turning ever, as if searching for something it could not find. She saw too that there was a light on the face, a light which came neither from the sun in the sky, nor the sun-beam on the wall, towards which it was unconsciously turned. I think it must have been the heavenly bow itself, shining upon all human clouds—a bow that had shone for thousands of ages before ever there was an Abraham, or a Noah, or any other of our faithless generation, which will not trust its God unless he swear that he will not destroy them. It was the ugliest face. But over it, as over the rugged channel of a sea, flowed the transparent waves of a heavenly delight.

When the service was over, almost before the words of the benediction had left the minister's lips, the people, according to Scotch habit, hurried out of the chapel, as if they could not possibly endure one word more. But Annie, who was always put up to the top of the pew, because there, by reason of an intruding pillar, it required a painful twist of the neck to see the minister, stood staring at the blind woman as she felt her way out of the chapel. There was no fear of putting her out by staring at her. When, at length, she

followed her into the open air, she found her standing by the door, turning her sightless face on all sides, as if looking for some one and trying hard to open her eyes that she might see better. Annie watched her, till, seeing her lips move, she knew, half by instinct, that she was murmuring, "The bairn's forgotten me!" Thereupon she glided up to her and said gently:

"If ye'll tell me whaur ye bide, I s' tak ye hame."

"What do they ca' *you*, bairn?" returned the blind woman, in a gruff, almost manlike voice, hardly less unpleasant to hear than her face was to look at.

"Annie Anderson," answered Annie.

"Ow, ay! I thought as muckle. I ken a' about ye. Gie's a haud o' yer han'. I bide i' that wee hoosie down at the brig, atween the dam and the Glamour, ye ken. Ye'll haud me aff o' the stanes?"

"Ay will I," answered Annie confidently.

"I could gang my lane, but I'm growin' some auld noo, and I'm jist raither feared for fa'in'."

"What garred ye think it was me—I never spak till ye afore?" asked Annie, as they walked on together.

"Weel, it's jist half guissin', an' half a kin' o' jeedgment—pittin things thegither, ye ken, my

bairn. Ye see, I kent a' the bairns that come to oor kirk weel eneuch already. I ken the word and amaist the fit o' them. And I had heard tell 'at Maister Bruce was come to oor kirk. Sae whan a lassie spak till me 'at I never saw afore, I jist a kin' o' kent 'at it bude to be yersel'."

All this was spoken in the same harsh voice, full of jars, as if ever driving against corners, and ready to break into a hoarse whisper. But the woman held Annie's hand kindly, and yielded like a child to her guidance, which was as careful as that of the angel that led Peter.

It was a new delight to Annie to have some one to whom she a child could be a kind of mother, towards whom she could fulfil a woman's highest calling—that of *ministering unto*; and it was with something of a sacred pride that she led her safe home, through the snowy streets, and down the steep path that led from the level of the bridge, with its three high stone arches, to the little meadow where her cottage stood. Before they reached it, the blind woman, whose name was Tibbie (*Isobel*) Dyster, had put many questions to her, and without asking one indiscreet, had yet, by her gift for fitting and fusing things in the retort of her own brain, come to a tolerably correct knowledge of her character, circumstances, and history.

As soon as they entered the cottage, Tibbie was

entirely at her ease. The first thing she did was to lift the kettle from the fire, and feel the fire with her hands in order to find out in what condition it was. She would not allow Annie to touch it : she could not trust the creature that had nothing but eyes to guide her, with such a delicate affair. Her very hands looked blind and trying to see, as, with fine up-curved tips, they went wandering over the tops of the live peats. She re-arranged them, put on some fresh pieces, blew a little at them all astray and to no purpose, was satisfied, coughed, and sank upon a chair, to put her bonnet off. Most women of her station were only a *mutch* or close cap, but Tibbie wore a bonnet with a brilliantly gay ribbon, so fond was she of bright colours, although she had nothing but the testimony of others, vague enough ere it succeeded in crossing the dark distances of her brain, as to the effect of those even with which she adorned her own person. Her room was very bare, but as clean as it was possible for room to be. Her bed was in the wall which divided it from the rest of the house, and this one room was her whole habitation. The other half of the cottage was occupied by an old cripple, nearly bed-ridden, to whose many necessities Tibbie used to minister. The eyes of the one and the legs of the other worked in tolerable harmony ; and if they had a quarrel now and then,

it was no greater than gave a zest to their intercourse. These particulars, however, Annie did not learn till afterwards.

She looked all about the room, and seeing no sign of any dinner for Tibbie, was reminded thereby that her own chance had considerably diminished.

"I maun awa hame," she said with a sigh.

"Ay, lassie; they'll be bidin' their denner for ye."

"Na, nae fear o' that," answered Annie, adding with another little sigh, "I doot there winna be muckle o' the broth to the fore or I win hame."

"Weel, jist bide, bairn, an' tak' a cup o' tay wi' me. It's a' 'at I hae to offer ye. Will ye bide?"

"Maybe I wad be i' yer gait," objected Annie feebly.

"Na, na; nae fear o' that. Ye'll read a bit to me efterhin."

"Ay will I."

And Annie stayed all the afternoon with Tibbie, and went home with the Bruces after the evening service. This was the beginning of her acquaintance with Tibbie Dyster.

It soon grew into a custom for Annie to take Tibbie home from the chapel—a custom which the Bruces could hardly have objected to, had they

been so inclined. But they were not so inclined, for it saved the broth—that is, each of them got a little more in consequence, and Annie's absence was therefore a Sabbath blessing.

Much as she was neglected at home, however, Annie was steadily gaining a good reputation in the town. Old men said she was a gude bairn, and old women said she was a douce lassie; while those who enjoyed finding fault more than giving praise, turned their silent approbation of Annie into expressions of disapproval of the Bruces—"lattin' her gang like a beggar, as gin she was no kith or kin o' theirs, whan it's weel kent whase heifer Rob Bruce is plooin' wi'."

But Robert nevertheless grew and prospered all day, and dreamed at night that he was the king, digging the pits for the English cavalry, and covering them again with the treacherous turf. Somehow the dream never went further. The field and the kingship would vanish and he only remain, the same Robert Bruce, the general dealer, plotting still, but in his own shop.

CHAPTER VI.

RESPONSIVE to Mr. Cupples's last words uttered from the brink of the pit into which his spirit was sinking, and probably forgotten straightway, Alec knocked at his door upon the Sunday evening, and entered. The strange creature was sitting in the same position as before, looking as if he had not risen since he spoke those words. But there was an alteration in the place, a certain Sunday look about the room, which Alec could not account for. The same caricatures jested from the walls; the same tumbler of toddy was steaming on the table amidst the same litter of books and papers covered with the same dust and marked with the same circles from the bottoms of wet tumblers and glasses. The same cutty-clay, of enviable blackness, reposed between the teeth of Mr. Cupples.

After he had been seated for a few moments, however, Alec all at once discovered the source of

the reformation-look of the place: Mr. Cupples had on a shirt-collar—clean and of imposing proportions. To this no doubt was attached a shirt, but as there was no further sign of its presence, it could not have affected the aspect of things. Although, however, this shirt-collar was no doubt the chief cause of the change of expression in the room, Alec, in the course of the evening, discovered further signs of improvement in the local morals; one, that the hearth had been cleared of a great heap of ashes, and now looked modest and moderate as if belonging to an old maid's cottage, instead of an old bachelor's garret; and another, that, upon the untidy table, lay an open book of divinity, a volume of Gurnall's *Christian Armour* namely, which I fear Mr. Cupples had chosen more for its wit than its devotion. While making these discoveries, Alec chanced to observe—he was quick-eyed—that some of the dusty papers on the table were scrawled over with the first amorphous appearance of metrical composition. These moved his curiosity; for what kind of poetry could the most unpoetic-looking Mr. Cupples produce from that great head of his with the lanky colourless hair?—But meantime we must return to the commencement of the interview.

“Ony mair Greek, laddie?” asked Mr. Cupples.

“No, thank you, sir,” answered Alec. “I only

came to see you. You told me to come again to-night."

"Did I? Well, it may stand. But I protest against being made accountable for anything that fellow Cupples may choose to say when I'm not at home."

Here he emptied his glass of toddy, and filled it again from the tumbler.

"Shall I go away?" asked Alec, half bewildered.

"No, no; sit still. You're a good sort of innocent, I think. I won't give you any toddy though. You need n't look so greedy at it."

"I don't want any toddy, sir. I never drank a tumbler in my life."

"For God's sake," exclaimed Mr. Cupples, with sudden energy, leaning forward in his chair, his blue eyes flashing on Alec—"for God's sake, never drink a drop.—Rainbows. Rainbows."

These last two words were spoken after a pause, and in a tone of sadness. Alec thought he was drunk again, and half rose to go.

"Dinna gang yet," said Mr. Cupples, authoritatively. "Ye come at yer ain will: ye maun gang at mine.—Gin I cud but get a kick at that fellow Cupples! But I declare I canna help it. Gin I war God, I wad cure him o' drink. It's the verra first thing I wad do."

Alec could not help being shocked at the irreverence of the words. But the solemnity of Mr. Cupples's face speedily dissipated the feeling. Suddenly changing his tone, he went on :

“What's your name?”

“Alec Forbes.”

“Alec Forbes. I'll try to remember it. I seldom remember anybody's name, though. I sometimes forget my own. What was the fellow's name you thrashed the other day?”

“Patrick Beauchamp. I did not mention it before.”

“The deevil it was!” exclaimed Mr. Cupples, half-starting from his seat. “Did ye gie him a *richt* thrashin'?”

“I think he had the worst of it. He gave in, any way.”

“He comes of a bad lot! I know all about them. They're from Strathspey, where my father came from—at least his father was. If the young fellow turns out well, it'll be a wonder. I'll tell you all about them.”

Mr. Cupples here launched into a somewhat discursive account of Patrick Beauchamp's antecedents, indicating by its minuteness that there must have been personal relations of some kind between them or their families. Perhaps he glanced at something of the sort when he said that old Beauchamp

was a hard man even for a lawyer. I will condense the story from the more diffuse conversational narrative, interrupted by question and remark on the part of Alec, and give it the shape of formal history.

Beauchamp's mother was the daughter of a Highland chief, whose pedigree went back to an Irish king of date so remote that his existence was doubtful to every one not personally interested in the extraction. Mrs. Beauchamp had all the fierceness without much of the grace belonging to the Celtic nature. Her pride of family, even, had not prevented her from revenging herself upon her father, who had offended her, by running away with a handsome W.S., who, taken with her good looks, and flattered by the notion of overcoming her pride, had found a conjunction of circumstances favourable to the conquest. It was not long, however, before both repented of the step. That her father should disown her was not of much consequence in any point of view, but that nobody in Edinburgh would admit her claims to distinction—which arose from the fact that they were so unpleasantly asserted that no one could endure herself—did disgust her considerably; and her annoyance found vent in abuse of her husband for having failed to place her in the sphere to which she had a just claim. The consequence

was, that he neglected her; and she sat at home brooding over her wrongs, despising and at length hating her husband, and meditating plans of revenge as soon as her child should be born. At length, within three months after the birth of Patrick, she found that he was unfaithful to her, and immediately demanded a separate maintenance. To this her husband made no further objection than policy required. But when she proceeded to impose an oath upon him that he would never take her child from her, the heart of the father demurred. Whereupon she swore that, if ever he made the attempt, she would poison the child rather than that he should succeed. He turned pale as death, and she saw that she had gained her point. And, indeed, the woman was capable of anything to which she had made up her mind—a power over one's self and friends not desirable except in view of such an object as that of *Lady Macbeth*. But Mrs. Beauchamp, like her, considered it only a becoming strength of spirit, and would have despised herself if she had broken one resolution for another indubitably better. So her husband bade her farewell, and made no lamentation except over the probable result of such training as the child must receive at the hands of such a mother. She withdrew to a country town not far from the Moray Frith, where she might live comfortably

on her small income, be a person of some consideration, and reap all the advantages of the peculiar facilities which the place afforded for the education of her boy, whom she would mould and model after her own heart.

“So you see, Mr.—I forget yer name—Forbes? yes, Forbes, if the rascal takes after his mother, you have made a dangerous enemy,” said Mr. Cupples, in conclusion.

Alec laughed.

“I advise you,” resumed Mr. Cupples, “to keep a gleg ee in yer heid, though—seriously. A body may lauch ower aften. It winna do to gang glowerin’ at rainbows. They ’re bonnie things, but they ’re nae brig-backs. Gin ye lippen to them, ye ’ll be i’ the water in a cat-loup.”

Alec was beginning to enter into the humour of the man.

“I see something like poetry lying about the table, Mr. Cupples,” said he, with a sly allusion to the *rainbows*. “Would you let me look at it?”

Mr. Cupples glanced at him sharply; but replied immediately :

“Broken bits o’ them! And the rainbows cast (*lose colour*) awfu’, ance ye tak’ the key-stane oot o’ them. Lat them sit up there, brigs (*bridges*) ower nae-thing, wi’ nae road upo’ the tap o’ them, like the stane brig o’ Drumdochart efter the spate (*flood*). Haud

yer han's and yer een aff o' them, as I tellt ye afore.—Ay, ay, ye can luik at thae screeds gin ye like. Only dinna say a word to me about ony o' them. And tak' warnin' by them yersel, never to write ae word o' poetry, to haud ye frae rivin'."

"Sma' fear o' that!" returned Alec, laughing.

"Weel, I houp sae.—Ye can mak' a kirk an' a mill o' them, gin ye like. They hae lain there lang eneuch. Noo, haud yer tongue. I'm gaein to fill my pipe again, afore I burn oot the dottle. I winna drink mair the nicht, cause it's the Sabbath, and I'm gaein to read my buik."

So saying, he proceeded to get the *dottle* out of his pipe, by knocking it on the hob; while Alec took up the paper that lay nearest. He found it contained a fragment of a poem in the Scotch language; and, searching amongst the rest of the scattered sheets, he soon got the whole of it together.

Now, although Alec had but little acquaintance with verse, he was able, thanks to Annie Anderson, to enjoy a ballad very heartily; and there was something in this one which, associating itself in his mind with the strange being before him, moved him more than he could account for. It was called

TIME AND TIDE.

As I was walkin' on the strand,
I spied an auld man sit
On ane auld rock ; and aye the waves
Cam washin' to its fit.
And aye his lips gaed mutterin',
And his ee was dull and blae.
As I cam near, he luik'd at me,
But this was a' his say :
“ Robbie and Jeannie war twa bonnie bairns,
And they played thegither upo' the shore :
Up cam the tide 'tween the mune and the sterns,
And pairtit the twa wi' an eerie roar.”

What can the auld man mean, quo' I,
Sittin' upo' the auld rock ?
The tide creeps up wi' moan and cry,
And a hiss 'maist like a mock.
The words he mutters maun be the en'
O' a weary dreary sang—
A deid thing floatin' in his brain,
That the tide will no lat gang.
“ Robbie and Jeannie war twa bonnie bairns,
And they played thegither upo' the shore :
Up cam the tide 'tween the mune and the sterns,
And pairtit the twa wi' an eerie roar.”

What pairtit them, auld man ? I said ;
Did the tide come up ower strang ?
'T was a braw deith for them that gaed,
Their troubles warn a lang.
Or was ane ta'en, and the ither left—
Ane to sing, ane to greet ?
It 's sair, richt sair, to be bereft,
But the tide is at yer feet.

“ Robbie and Jeannie war twa bonnie bairns,
And they played thegither upo' the shore :
Up cam the tide 'tween the mune and the sterns,
And pairtit the twa wi' an eerie roar.”

Maybe, quo' I, 't was Time's gray sea,
Whase droonin' 's waur to bide ;
But Death 's a diver, seekin' ye
Aneath its chokin' tide.
And ye 'll luik in ane anither's ee
Triumphin' ower gray Time.
But never a word he answered me,
But ower wi' his dreary chime—

“ Robbie and Jeannie war twa bonnie bairns,
And they played thegither upo' the shore :
Up cam the tide 'tween the mune and the sterns,
And pairtit the twa wi' an eerie roar.”

Maybe, auld man, said I, 't was Change
That crap atween the twa ?
Hech ! that 's a droonin' awfu' strange,
Ane waur than ane and a'.

He spak nae mair. I luik't and saw
That the auld lips cudna gang.

The tide unseen took him awa—

Left me to end his sang :

“Robbie and Jeannie war twa bonnie bairns,

And they played thegither upo' the shore :

Up cam the tide 'tween the mune and the sterns,

And tuik them whaur pairtin' shall be no more.”

Before he had finished reading, the refrain had become so familiar to Alec, that he unconsciously murmured the last, changed as it was from the preceding form, aloud. Mr. Cupples looked up from Gurnall uneasily, fidgeted in his chair, and said testily :

“A' nonsense ! Moonshine and rainbows !
Haud yer tongue ! The last line 's a' wrang.”

He then returned with a determined air to the consideration of his *Christian Armour*, while Alec, in whom the minor tone of the poem had greatly deepened the interest he felt in the writer, gazed at him in a bewilderment like that one feels when his eyes refuse to take their proper relation to the perspective before them. He could not get those verses and Mr. Cupples into harmony. Not daring to make any observation, however, he sat with the last leaf still in his hand, and a reverential stare upon his face, which at length produced a remark-

able effect upon the object of it. Suddenly lifting his eyes—

“What are ye glowerin’ at me for?” he exclaimed, flinging his book from him, which, missing the table, fell on the floor on the further side of it. “I ’m neither ghaist nor warlock. Damn ye! gang oot, gin ye be gaun to stick me throu and throu wi’ yer een, that gait.”

“I beg your pardon, Mr. Cupples. I didn’t mean to be rude,” said Alec humbly.

“Weel, cut yer stick. I hae eneuch o’ ye for ae nicht. I canna stan’ glowerin’ een, especially i’ the heids o’ idiots o’ innocents like you.”

I am sorry to have to record what Alec learned from the landlady afterwards, that Mr. Cupples went to bed that night, notwithstanding it was the Sabbath, more drunk than she had ever known him. Indeed he could not properly be said to have gone to bed at all, for he had tumbled on the counterpane in his clothes and clean shirt-collar; where she had found him fast asleep the next morning, with Gurnall’s *Christian Armour* terribly crumpled under him.

“But,” said Alec, “what is Mr. Cupples?”

“That’s a queston he cudna weel answer ye himsel’,” was the reply. “He does a heap o’ things; writes for the lawyers whiles; buys and sells queer buiks; gies lessons in Greek and Hebrew—but he

disna like that—he canna bide to be contred, and laddies is gey contresome; helps onybody that wants help i' the way o' figures—whan their buiks gang wrang ye ken, for figures is some ill for jummlin'. He's a kin' o' librarian at yer ain college i' the noo, Mr. Forbes. The auld man's deid, and Mr. Cupples is jist doin' the wark. They winna gie him the place—'cause he has an ill name for drink—but they 'll get as muckle wark oot o' him as gin they did, and for half the siller. The body hauds at onything weel enouch a' day, but the minute he comes hame, oot comes the tappit hen, and he jist sits doon and drinks till he turns the warl upo' the tap o' 'm."

The next day, about noon, Alec went into the library, where he found Mr. Cupples busy re-arranging the books and the catalogue, both of which had been neglected for years. This was the first of many visits to the library, or rather to the librarian.

There was a certain mazy sobriety of demeanour about Mr. Cupples all day long, as if in the presence of such serious things as books he was bound to be upon his good behaviour, and confine his dissipation to taking snuff in prodigious quantities. He was full of information about books, and had, besides, opinions concerning them, which were always ready to assume quaint and decided expression. For instance: one after-

noon, Alec having taken up *Tristram Shandy* and asked him what kind of a book it was, the librarian snatched it from his hands and put it on the shelf again, answering :

“A pailace o’ dirt and impidence and speeritual stink. The clever deevil had his entrails in his breest and his hert in his belly, and regairdet neither God nor his ain mither. His lauchter’s no like the cracklin’ o’ thorns unner a pot, but like the nicherin’ o’ a deil ahin’ the wainscot. Lat him sit and rot there !”

Asking him another day what sort of poet Shelley was, Alec received the answer :

“A bonny cratur, wi’ mair thochts nor there was room for i’ the bit heid o’ ’m. Consequently he gaed staiggerin’ aboot as gin he had been tied to the tail o’ an inveesible balloon. Unco licht heidit, but no muckle hairm in him by natur’.”

He never would remain in the library after the day began to ebb. The moment he became aware that the first filmy shadow had fallen from the coming twilight, he caught up his hat, locked the door, gave the key to the sacrist, and hurried away.

The friendly relation between the two struck its roots deeper and deeper during the session, and Alec bade him good-bye with regret.

Mr. Cupples was a baffled poet trying to be a humourist—baffled—not by the booksellers or the

public—for such baffling one need not have a profound sympathy—but baffled by his own weakness, his incapacity for assimilating sorrow, his inability to find or invent a theory of the universe which should show it still beautiful despite of passing pain, of checked aspiration, of the ruthless storms that lay waste the Edens of men, and dissolve the high triumph of their rainbows. He had yet to learn that through “the heartache and the thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to,” man becomes capable of the blessedness to which all the legends of a golden age point. Not finding, when he most needed it, such a theory even in the New Testament—for he had been diligently taught to read it awry—Mr. Cupples took to jesting and toddy; but, haunting the doors of Humour, never got further than the lobby.

With regard to Patrick Beauchamp, as far as Alec could see, his dignity had succeeded in consoling itself for the humiliation it had undergone, by an absolute and eternal renunciation of all knowledge of Alec Forbes’s existence.

CHAPTER VII.

WINTER had begun to withdraw his ghostly troops, and Glamerton began to grow warmer. Not half so many cold feet dangled from the cold legs of little children in the torturing churches; not half so many coughs tore the chests of the poor old men and women as they stooped over their little fires, with the blasts from door and window-sill in their ankles and the backs of their necks. Annie, who had been very happy all the time, began to be aware of something more at hand. A flutter scarcely recognizable, as of the wings of awaking delight, would stir her little heart with a sensation of physical presence and motion; she would find herself giving an involuntary skip as she walked along, and now and then humming a bit of a psalm tune. A hidden well was throbbing in the child's bosom. Its waters had been frozen by the winter; and the spring, which sets all things springing, had made it flow and swell

afresh, soon to break bubbling forth. But her joy was gentle, for even when she was merriest, it was in a sober, *douce*, and maidenly fashion, testifying that she had already walked with Sorrow, and was not afraid of her.

Robert Bruce's last strategical move against the community had been tolerably successful, even in his own eyes; and he was consequently so far satisfied with himself, that he could afford to be in good humour with other people. Annie came in for a share of this humour; and although she knew him too well to have any regard for him, it was yet a comfort to her to be on such terms with him as not to have to dread a bitter word every time she chanced to meet him. This comfort, however, stood on a sandy foundation; for the fact that an expected customer had not called upon the Saturday might be enough to set the acetous fermentation at work all the Sunday in the bosom of Robert Bruce.

At length, one bright day in the end of March, Alec came home, not the worse to friendly eyes for having been at college. He seemed the same cheery, active youth as before. The chief differences apparent were, that he had grown considerably, and that he wore a coat. The hat, at that time a necessary portion of the college costume, he had discarded, wearing his old cap in preference.

There was likewise a certain indescribable alteration in tone and manner, a certain general crystallization and polish, which the same friends regarded as an indubitable improvement.

The day after his arrival, crossing the square of Glamerton, he spied, in a group of men talking together, his old friend, Thomas Crann. He went up and shook hands with him, and with Andrew Constable, the clothier.

"Has na he grown a lang chield?" said Andrew to Thomas, regarding Alec kindly.

"Humph!" returned Thomas, "he'll jist need the langer coffin."

Alec laughed; but Andrew said, "Hoot! hoot!"

Thomas and Alec walked away together. But scarcely a sentence had been exchanged before the stonemason, with a delicacy of perception of which his rough manner and horny hands gave no indication, felt that a film of separation had come between the youth and himself. Anxious to break through it, he said abruptly,

"Hoo's yer immortal pairt, Alec? Min' ye, there's a knowledge that worketh deith."

Alec laughed—not scornfully—but he laughed.

"Ye may lauch, Alec, but it's a sair trowth," said the mason.

Alec held out his hand, for here their way diverged. Thomas shook it kindly, but walked

away gloomy. Arrived at home, he shut to his door, and went down on his knees by his bedside. When Jean came with his supper she found the door fast.

In order to prepare for the mathematical studies of the following year, Alec went to the school again in the morning of most days, Mr. Malison being well able to render him all the assistance he required. The first time he made his appearance at the door, a silence as of death was the sign of his welcome; but a tumult presently arose, and discipline was for a time suspended. I am afraid he had a slight feeling of condescension, as he returned the kind greeting of his old companions.—Raise a housemaid to be cook, and she will condescend to the new housemaid.

Annie sat still, staring at her book, and turning red and pale alternately. But he took no notice of her, and she tried to be glad of it.

When school was over, however, he came up to her in the lane, and addressed her kindly.

But the delicate little maiden felt, as the rough stonemason had felt, that a change had passed over the old companion and friend. True, the change was only a breath—a mere shadow. Yet it was a measureless gulf between them. Annie went to her garret that night with a sense of sad privation.

But her pain sprung from a source hardly so deep.

as that of the stonemason. For the change she found in Alec was chiefly of an external kind, and if she had a vague feeling of a deeper change, it had scarcely yet come up into her consciousness. When she saw the *young gentleman* her heart sank within her. Her friend was lost ; and a shape was going about, as he did, looking awfully like the old Alec, who had carried her in his arms through the invading torrent. Nor was there wanting, to complete the bewilderment of her feeling, a certain additional reverence for the apparition, which she must after all regard as a further development of the same person.

Mrs. Forbes never asked her to the house now, and it was well for her that her friendship with Tibbie Dyster had begun. But as she saw Alec day after day at school, the old colours began to revive out of the faded picture—for to her it was a faded picture, although new varnished. And when the spring had advanced a little, the boat was got out, and then Alec could not go rowing in the *Bonnie Annie* without thinking of its godmother, and inviting her to join them. Indeed Curly would not have let him forget her if he had been so inclined; for he felt that she was a bond between him and Alec, and he loved Alec the more devotedly that the rift between their social positions had begun to show itself. The devotion of the school-

boy to his superior in schoolboy arts had begun to change into something like the devotion of the clansman to his chief—not the worst folly the world has known—in fact not a folly at all, except it stop there: many enthusiasms are follies only because they are not greater enthusiasms. And not unfrequently would an odd laugh of consciousness between Annie and Curly, unexpectedly meeting, reveal the fact that they were both watching for a peep or a word of Alec.

In due time the harvest came; and Annie could no more keep from haunting the harvest, than the crane could keep from flying south when the summer is over. She watched all the fields around Glamerton; she knew what response each made to the sun, and which would first be ripe for the reaping; and the very day that the sickle was put in, there was Annie to see and share in the joy. How mysterious she thought those long colonnades of slender pillars, each supporting its own waving comet-head of barley! Or when the sun was high, she would lie down on the ground, and look far into the little forest of yellow polished oat-stems, stretching away and away into the unseen—alas, so soon to fall, and leave a naked commonplace behind! If she were only small enough to go wandering about in it, what wonders might she not discover!—But I forget that I am telling a story, and not writing a

fairy-tale.—Unquestioned as uninvited, she was, as she had often been before, one of the company of reapers, gatherers, binders, and stookers, assembled to collect the living gold of the earth from the early fields of the farm of Howglen. Sadly her thoughts went back to the old days when Dowie was master of the field, and she was Dowie's little mistress. Not that she met with anything but kindness—only it was not the kindness she had had from Dowie. But the pleasure of being once more near Alec almost made up for every loss. And he was quite friendly, although, she must confess, not quite so familiar as of old. But that did not matter, she assured herself.

The labourers all knew her, and themselves took care that she should have the portion of their food which her assistance had well earned, and which was all her wages. She never refused anything that was offered her, except money. That she had taken only once in her life—from Mr. Cowie, whom she continued to love the more dearly for it, although she no longer attended his church.

But again the harvest was safely lodged, and the sad old age of the year sank through rains and frosts to his grave. The winter came and Alec went.

He had not been gone a week when Mrs. Forbes's invitations re-commenced; and, as if to make up for the neglect of the summer, they were more fre-

quent than before. No time was so happy for Annie as the times she spent with her. She never dreamed of accusing her of fickleness or unevenness, but received whatever kindness she offered with gratitude. And, this winter, she began to make some return in the way of household assistance.

One day, while searching in the lumber-room for something for Mrs. Forbes, she came upon a little book lying behind a box. It was damp and swollen and mouldy, and the binding was decayed and broken. The inside was dingy and spotted with brown spots, and had too many *f*'s in it, as she thought. Yet the first glance fascinated her. It had opened in the middle of *L'Allegro*. Mrs. Forbes found her standing spell-bound, reading the rhymed poems of the man whose blank-verse, two years before, she had declined as not what poetry ought to be. I have often seen a child refuse his food, and, after being compelled to eat one mouthful, gladly devour the whole. In like manner Annie, having once tasted Milton's poetry, did not let it go till she had devoured even the *Paradise Lost*, of which when she could not make sense, she at least made music—the chords of old John Milton's organ sounding through his son's poetry in the brain of a little Scotch lassie who never heard an organ in her life.

CHAPTER VIII.

“**H**ILLO, bantam !” exclaimed Mr. Cupples, to Alec entering his garret within an hour of his arrival in his old quarters, and finding the soul of the librarian still hovering in the steam of his tumbler, like one of Swedenborg’s damned over the odour of his peculiar hell. As he spoke he emptied the glass, the custom of drinking from which, instead of from the tumbler itself—rendering it impossible to get drunk all at once—is one of the atonements offered by the Scotch to their tutelar God—Propriety.—“Come awa’. What are ye stan’in’ there for, as gin ye warn a hame,” he added, seeing that Alec lingered on the threshold. “Sit doon. I’m nae a’thegither sorry to see ye.”

“Have you been to the country, Mr. Cupples?” asked Alec, as he took a chair.

“The country! Na, I haena been i’ the country. I’m a toon-snail. The country’s for

calves and geese. It's ower green for me. I like the gray stanes—weel biggit, to haud oot the cauld. I jist reverse the opingon o' the auld duke in Mr. Shackspere;—for this my life

'Find trees in tongues, its running brooks in books,
Stones in sermons,——'

and I canna gang on ony farther wi' 't. The last's true ony gait. I winna gie ye ony toddy though."

"I dinna want nane."

"That's richt. Keep to that negation as an anchor o' the soul, sure and steadfast. There's no boddom to the sea ye'll gang doon in gin ye cut the cable that hauds ye to that anchor. Here's to ye!"

And again Mr. Cupples emptied his glass.

"Hoo are ye prepared for yer mathematics?" he resumed.

"Middlin' only," answered Alec.

"I was doobtin' that. Sma' preparation does weel enech for Professor Fraser's Greek; but ye'll fin' it's anither story wi' the mathematics. Ye maun jist come to me wi' them as ye did wi' the Greek."

"Thank you, Mr. Cupples," said Alec heartily. "I don't know how to repay you."

"Repay me! I want nae repayment. Only

spier nae questons at me, and gang awa whan I'm drunk."

After all his summer preparation, Alec was still behind in mathematics; for while, with a distinct object in view, he was capable of much—without one, reading was a weariness to him. His medical studies, combining, as they did, in their anatomical branch, much to be learned by the eye and the hand with what was to be learned from books, interested him more and more.

One afternoon, intent upon a certain course of investigation, he remained in the dissecting room after the other students had gone, and worked away till it grew dark. He then lighted a candle, and worked on. The truth was unfolding itself gently and willingly. At last, feeling tired, he laid down his scalpel, dropped upon a wooden chair, and, cold as it was, fell fast asleep. When he awoke, the candle was *bobbing* in its socket, alternately lighting and shadowing the dead man on the table. Strange glooms were gathering about the bottles on the shelves, and especially about one corner of the room, where—but I must not particularize too much. It must be remembered that he had awaked suddenly, in a strange place, and with a fitful light. He confessed to Mr. Cupples that he had felt a little uncomfortable—not frightened, but *eerie*. He was just going to rise and go

home, when, as he stretched out his hand for his scalpel, the candle sunk in darkness, and he lost the guiding glitter of the knife. At the same moment, he caught a doubtful gleam of two eyes looking in at him from one of the windows. That moment the place became insupportable with horror. The vague sense of an undefined presence turned the school of science into a charnel-house. He started up, hurried from the room, feeling as if his feet took no hold of the floor, and his back was fearfully exposed, locked the door, threw the key upon the porter's table, and fled. He did not recover his equanimity till he found himself in the long narrow street that led to his lodgings, lighted from many little shop windows in stone gable and front.

By the time he had had his tea, and learned a new proposition of Euclid, the fright seemed to lie far behind him. It was not so far as he thought, however, for he started to his feet when a sudden gust of wind shook his windows. But then it was a still frosty night, and such a gust was not to be expected. He looked out. Far above shone the stars.

"How they sparkle in the frost!" he said, as if the frost reached them. But they did look like the essential life that makes snow-flakes and icy spangles everywhere—they were so like them, only

they were of fire. Even snow itself must have fire at the heart of it.—All was still enough up there.

Then he looked down into the street, full of the comings and goings of people, some sauntering and staring, others hastening along. Beauchamp was looking in at the window of a second-hand bookshop opposite.

Not being able to compose himself again to his studies, he resolved, as he had not called on Mr. Fraser for some time, and the professor had not been at the class that day, to go and inquire after him now.

Mr. Fraser lived in the quadrangle of the college; but in the mood Alec was in, nothing would do him so much good as a walk in the frost. He was sure of a welcome from the old man; for although Alec gave but little attention to Greek now, Mr. Fraser was not at all dissatisfied with him, knowing that he was doing his best to make himself a good doctor. His friendliness towards him had increased; for he thought he saw in him noble qualities; and now that he was an old man, he delighted to have a youth near him with whose youthfulness he could come into harmonious contact. It is because the young cannot recognize the youth of the aged, and the old will not acknowledge the experience of the young, that they repel each other.

Alec was shown into the professor's drawing-room. This was unusual. The professor was seated in an easy chair, with one leg outstretched before him.

"Excuse me, Mr. Forbes," he said, holding out his left hand without rising. "I am laid up with the gout—I don't know why. The port wine my grandfather drunk, I suppose. I never drink it. I'm afraid it's old age. And yon's my nurse.—Mr. Forbes, your cousin, Kate, my dear."

Alec started. There, at the other side of the fire, sat a girl, half smiling and half blushing as she looked up from her work. The candles between them had hid her from him. He advanced, and she rose and held out her hand. He was confused; she was perfectly collected, although the colour rose a little more in her cheek. She might have been a year older than Alec.

"So you are a cousin of mine, Mr. Forbes!" she said, when they were all seated by the blazing fire—she with a piece of plain work in her hands, he with a very awkward nothing in his, and the professor contemplating his swathed leg on the chair before him.

"So your uncle says," he answered, "and I am very happy to believe him. I hope we shall be good friends."

Alec was recovering himself.

"I hope we shall," she responded, with a quick, shy, asking glance from her fine eyes.

Those eyes were worth looking into, if only as a study of colour. They were of many hues marvellously blended. I think grey and blue and brown and green were all to be found in them. Their glance rather-discomposed Alec. He had not learned before that ladies' eyes are sometimes very discomposing. Yet he could not keep his from wandering towards them; and the consequence was that he soon lost the greater part of his senses. After sitting speechless for some moments, and feeling as if he had been dumb for as many minutes, he was seized by a horrible conviction that if he remained silent an instant longer, he would be driven to do or say something absurd. So he did the latter at once by bursting out with the stupid question,

"What are you working at?"

"A duster," she answered instantly—this time without looking up.

Now the said duster was of the finest cambric; so that Alec could not help seeing that she was making game of him. This banished his shyness, and put him on his mettle.

"I see," he said, "when I ask questions, you—"

"Tell lies," she interposed, without giving him time even to hesitate; adding,

"Does your mother answer all your questions, Mr. Forbes?"

"I believe she does—one way or other."

"Then it is sometimes the other way? Is she nice?"

"Who?" returned Alec, surprised into doubt.

"Your mother."

"She's the best woman in the world," he answered with vehemence, almost shocked at having to answer such a question.

"Oh! I beg your pardon," returned Kate, laughing; and the laugh curled her lip, revealing very pretty teeth, with a semi-transparent pearly-blue shadow in them.

"I am glad she is nice," she went on. "I should like to know her. Mothers are not *always* nice. I knew a girl at school whose mother wasn't nice at all."

She did not laugh after this childish speech, but let her face settle into perfect stillness—sadness indeed, for a shadow came over the stillness. Mr. Fraser sat watching the two with his amused old face, one side of it twitching in the effort to suppress the smile which sought to break from the useful half of his mouth. His gout could not have been very bad just then.

"I see, Katie, what that long chin of yours is thinking," he said.

“What is my chin thinking, uncle?” she asked.

“That uncles are not always nice either. They snub little girls, sometimes, don’t they?”

“I know one who *is* nice, all except one naughty leg.”

She rose, as she said this, and going round to the back of his chair, leaned over it, and kissed his forehead. The old man looked up to her gratefully.

“Ah, Katie!” he said, “you may make game of an old man like me. But don’t try your tricks on Mr. Forbes there. He won’t stand them.”

Alec blushed. Kate went back to her seat, and took up her duster again.

Alec was a little short-sighted, though he had never discovered it till now. When Kate leaned over her uncle’s chair, near which he was sitting, he saw that she was still prettier than he had thought her before.—There are few girls who to a short-sighted person look prettier when they come closer; the fact being that the general intent of the face, which the generalizing effect of the shortness of the sight reveals, has ordinarily more of beauty in it than has yet been carried out in detail; so that, as the girl approaches, one face seems to melt away, and another, less beautiful, to dawn up through it.

But, as I have said, this was not Alec’s expe-

rience with Kate ; for, whatever it might indicate, she looked prettier when she came nearer. He found too that her great mass of hair, instead of being, as he had thought, dull, was in reality full of glints and golden hints, as if she had twisted up a handful of sunbeams with it in the morning, which, before night, had faded a little, catching something of the duskiess and shadowiness of their prison. One thing more he saw—that her hand—she rested it on the back of the dark chair, and so it had caught his eye—was small and white ; and those were all the qualities Alec was as yet capable of appreciating in a hand. Before she got back to her seat, he was very nearly in love with her. I suspect that those generally who fall in love at first sight have been in love before. At least such was Romeo's case. And certainly it was not Alec's. Yet I must confess, if he had talked stupidly before, he talked worse now ; and at length went home with the conviction that he had made a great donkey of himself.

As he walked the lonely road, and the street now fast closing its windows and going to sleep, he was haunted by a very different vision from that which had accompanied him a few hours ago. Then it was the dead face of a man, into which his busy fancy had reset the living eyes that he had seen looking in at the window of the dissecting room ;

now it was the lovely face of his new-found cousin, possessing him so that he could fear nothing. Life had cast out death. Love had cast out fear.

But love had cast out more. For he found, when he got home, that he could neither read nor think. If Kate could have been *conscious* of its persistent intrusion upon Alec's thoughts, and its constant interruption of his attempts at study, she would have been ashamed of that pretty face of hers, and ready to disown it for its forwardness. At last, he threw his book to the other end of the room, and went to bed, where he found it not half so difficult to go to sleep as it had been to study.

The next day things went better; for he was not yet so lost that a night's rest could do him no good. But it was fortunate that there was no Greek class, and that he was not called up to read Latin that day. For the anatomy, he was in earnest about that; and love itself, so long as its current is not troubled by opposing rocks, will not disturb the studies of a real student—much.

As he left the dissecting-room, he said to himself that he would just look in and see how Mr. Fraser was. He was shown into the professor's study.

Mr. Fraser smiled as he entered with a certain grim comicality which Alec's conscience inter-

pretended into: "This won't do, my young man."

"I hope your gout is better to-day, sir," he said, sending his glance wide astray of his words.

"Yes, I thank you, Mr. Forbes," answered Mr. Fraser, "it is better. "Won't you sit down?"

Warned by that smile, Alec was astute enough to decline, and presently took his leave. As he shut the study door, however, he thought he would just peep into the dining-room, the door of which stood open opposite. There she was, sitting at the table, writing.

"Who can that letter be to?" thought Alec. But it was early days to be jealous.

"How do you do, Mr. Forbes?" said Kate, holding out her hand.

Could it be that he had seen her only yesterday? Or was his visual memory so fickle that he had forgotten what she was like? She was so different from what he had been fancying her!

The fact was merely this—that she had been writing to an old friend, and her manner for the time, as well as her expression, was affected by her mental proximity to that friend;—so plastic—so fluent even—was her whole nature. Indeed Alec was not long in finding out that one of her witcheries was, that she was never the same. But on this the first occasion, the alteration in her bewildered him.

"I am glad to find your uncle better," he said.

"Yes.—You have seen him, then?"

"Yes. I was very busy in the dissecting-room, till——"

He stopped; for he saw her shudder.

"I beg your pardon," he hastened to substitute.
—"We are so used to those things, that——"

"Don't say a word more about it, please," she said hastily. Then, in a vague kind of way—
"Won't you sit down?"

"No, thank you. I must go home," answered Alec, feeling that she did not want him. "Good night," he added, advancing a step.

"Good night, Mr. Forbes," she returned in the same vague manner, and without extending her hand.

Alec checked himself, bowed, and went with a feeling of mortification, and the resolution not to repeat his visit too soon.

She interfered with his studies notwithstanding, and sent him wandering in the streets, when he ought to have been reading at home. One bright moonlight night he found himself on the quay, and spying a boat at the foot of one of the stairs, asked the man in it if he was ready for a row. The man agreed. Alec got in, and they rowed out of the river, and along the coast to a fishing village where the man lived, and whence Alec walked

home. This was the beginning of many such boating excursions made by Alec in the close of this session. They greatly improved his boatmanship, and strengthened his growing muscles. The end of the winter was mild, and there were not many days unfit for the exercise.

CHAPTER IX.

THE next Saturday but one, Alec received a note from Mr. Fraser, hoping that his new cousin had not driven him away, and inviting him to dine that same afternoon.

He went. After dinner the old man fell asleep in his chair.

"Where were you born?" Alec asked Kate.

She was more like his first impression of her.

"Don't you know?" she replied. "In the north of Sutherlandshire—near the foot of a great mountain, from the top of which, on the longest day, you can see the sun, or a bit of him at least, all night long."

"How glorious!" said Alec.

"I don't know. *I* never saw him. And the winters are so long and terrible! Nothing but snowy hills about you, and great clouds always coming down with fresh loads of snow to scatter over them."

"Then you don't want to go back?"

"No. There is nothing to make me wish to go back. There is no one there to love me now."

She looked very sad for a few moments.

"Yes," said Alec, thoughtfully; "a winter without love must be dreadful. But I like the winter; and we have plenty of it in our quarter too."

"Where is your home?"

"Not many miles north of this."

"Is it a nice place?"

"Of course I think so."

"Ah! you have a mother. I wish I knew her."

"I wish you did.—True: the whole place is like her to me. But I don't think everybody would admire it. There are plenty of bare snowy hills there too in winter. But I think the summers and the harvests are as delightful as anything can be, except——"

"Except what?"

"Don't make me say what will make you angry with me."

"Now you must, else I shall fancy something that will make me *more* angry."

"Except your face, then," said Alec, frightened at his own boldness, but glancing at her shyly.

She flushed a little, but did not look angry.

"I don't like that," she said. "It makes one feel awkward."

"At least," rejoined Alec, emboldened, "you must allow it is your own fault."

"I can't help my face," she said, laughing.

"Oh! you know what I mean. You made me say it."

"Yes, after you had half-said it already. Don't do it again."

And there followed more of such foolish talk, uninteresting to my readers.

"Where were you at school?" asked Alec, after a pause. "Your uncle told me you were at school."

"Near London," she answered.

"Ah! that accounts for your beautiful speech."

"There again. I declare I will wake my uncle if you go on in that way."

"I beg your pardon," protested Alec; "I forgot."

"But," she went on, "in Sutherlandshire we don't talk so horribly as they do here."

"I daresay not," returned Alec, humbly.

"I don't mean you. I wonder how it is that you speak so much better than all the people here."

"I suppose because my mother speaks well. She never lets me speak broad Scotch to her."

"Your mother again! She's everything to you."

Alec did not reply.

"I *should* like to see her," pursued Kate.

"You must come and see her, then."

"See whom?" asked Mr. Fraser, rousing himself from his nap.

"My mother, sir," answered Alec.

"Oh! I thought you had been speaking of Katie's friend," said the professor, and fell asleep again.

"Uncle means Bessie Warner, who is coming by the steamer from London on Monday. Isn't it kind of uncle to ask her to come and see me here?"

"He is kind always. Was Miss Warner a schoolfellow of yours?"

"Yes—no—not exactly. She was one of the governesses. I *must* go and meet her at the steamer. Will you go with me?"

"I shall be delighted: Do you know when she arrives?"

"They say about six. I daresay it is not very punctual."

"Oh! yes, she is—when the weather is decent. I will make inquiries, and come and fetch you."

"Thank you.—I suppose I may, uncle?"

"What, my dear?" said the professor, rousing himself again.

"Have my cousin to take care of me when I go to meet Bessie?"

"Yes, certainly. I shall be much obliged to you, Mr. Forbes. I am not quite so agile as I was at your age, though my gouty leg *is* better."

This conversation would not have been worth recording were it not that it led to the walk and the waiting on Monday.—They found, when they reached the region of steamers, that she had not yet been signalled, but her people were expecting the signal every minute. So Alec and Kate walked out along the pier, to pass the time. This pier runs down the side of the river, and a long way into the sea. It had begun to grow dark, and Alec had to take great care of Kate amongst the tramways, coils of rope, and cables that crossed their way. At length they got clear of these, and found themselves upon the pier, built of great rough stones—lonely and desert, tapering away into the dark, its end invisible, but indicated by the red light far in front.

"It is a rough season of the year for a lady to come by sea," said Alec.

"Bessie is very fond of the sea," answered Kate.
"I hope you will like her, Mr. Forbes."

“Do you want me to like her better than you?” rejoined Alec. “Because if you do——”

“Look how beautiful that red light is on the other side of the river,” interrupted Kate. “And there is another further out.”

“When the man at the helm gets those two lights in a line,” said Alec, “he may steer straight in, in the darkest night—that is if the tide serves for the bar.”

“Look how much more glorious the red shine is on the water below!” said Kate.

“It looks so wet!” returned Alec,—“just like blood.”

He almost cursed himself as he said so, for he felt Kate’s hand stir as if she would withdraw it from his arm. But after fluttering like a bird for a moment, it settled again upon its perch, and there rested.

The day had been quite calm, but now a sudden gust of wind from the north-east swept across the pier and made Kate shiver. Alec drew her shawl closer about her, and her arm further within his. They were now close to the sea. On the other side of the wall which rose on their left, they could hear the first of the sea-waves. It was a dreary place—no sound even indicating the neighbourhood of life. On one side, the river below them went flowing out to the sea in the dark, giving a cold, sluggish

gleam now and then, as if it were a huge snake heaving up a bend of its wet back, as it hurried away to join its fellows; on the other side, rose a great wall of stone, beyond which was the sound of long waves following in troops out of the dark, and falling upon a low moaning coast. Clouds hung above the sea; and above the clouds two or three disconsolate stars.

"Here is a stair," said Alec. "Let us go up on the top of the sea-wall, and then we shall catch the first glimpse of the light at her funnel."

They climbed the steep rugged steps, and stood on the broad wall, hearing the sea-pulses lazily fall at its foot. The wave crept away after it fell, and returned to fall again like a weary hound. There was hardly any life in the sea. How mournful it was to lie out there, the wintry night, beneath an all but starless heaven, with the wind vexing it when it wanted to sleep!

Alec feeling Kate draw a deep breath like the sigh of the sea, looked round in her face. There was still light enough to show it frowning and dark and sorrowful and hopeless. It was in fact a spiritual mirror, which reflected in human forms the look of that weary waste of waters. She gave a little start, gathered herself together, and murmured something about the cold.

"Let us go down again," said Alec.—"The

wind has risen considerably, and the wall will shelter us down below."

"No, no," she answered; "I like it. We can walk here just as well. I don't mind the wind."

"I thought you were afraid of falling off."

"No, not in the dark. I should be, I daresay, if I could see how far we are from the bottom."

So they walked on. The waves no longer fell at the foot of the wall, but leaned their breasts against it, gleaming as they rose on its front, and darkening as they sank low towards its deep base.

The wind kept coming in gusts, tearing a white gleam now and then on the dark surface of the sea. Behind them shone the dim lights of the city; before them all was dark as eternity, except for the one light at the end of the pier. At length Alec spied another out at sea.

"I believe that is the steamer," he said. "But she is a good way off. We shall have plenty of time to walk to the end—that is, if you would like to go."

"Certainly; let us go on. I want to stand on the very point," answered Kate.

They soon came to the lighthouse on the wall, and there descended to the lower part of the pier, the end of which now plunged with a steep descent into the sea. It was constructed of great stones clamped with iron, and built into a natural founda-

tion of rock. Up the slope the waves rushed, and down the slope they sank again, with that seemingly aimless and resultless rise and fall, which makes the sea so dreary and sad to those men and women who are not satisfied without some goal in view, some outcome of their labours; for it goes on and on, answering ever to the call of sun and moon, and the fierce trumpet of the winds, yet working nothing but the hopeless wear of the bosom in which it lies bound for ever.

They stood looking out into the great dark before them, dark air, dark sea, dark sky, watching the one light which grew brighter as they gazed. Neither of them saw that a dusky figure was watching them from behind a great cylindrical stone that stood on the end of the pier, close to the wall.

A wave rushed up almost to their feet.

"Let us go," said Kate, with a shiver. "I can't bear it longer. The water is calling me and threatening me. There! How that wave rushed up as if it wanted me at once!"

Alec again drew her closer to him, and turning, they walked slowly back. He was silent with the delight of having that lovely creature all to himself, leaning on his arm, in the infolding and protecting darkness, and Kate was likewise silent.

By the time they reached the quay at the other

end of the pier, the steamer had crossed the bar, and they could hear the *thud* of her paddles treading the water beneath them, as if eagerly because she was near her rest. After a few struggles, she lay quiet in her place, and they went on board.

Alec saw Kate embrace a girl perhaps a little older than herself, helped her to find her luggage, put them into a chaise, took his leave, and went home.

He did not know that all the way back along the pier they had been followed by Patrick Beauchamp.

CHAPTER X.

EXCITED, and unable to settle to his work, Alec ran up stairs to Mr. Cupples, whom he had not seen for some days. He found him not more than half-way towards his diurnal goal.

“What’s come o’ *you*, bantam, this mony a day?” said Mr. Cupples.

“I saw ye last Saturday,” said Alec.

“Last Setterday week, ye mean,” rejoined the librarian. “Hoo ’s the mathematics comin’ on?”

“To tell the truth, I’m raither ahin’ wi’ them,” answered Alec.

“I was thinkin’ as muckle. Rainbows! Thae rainbows! And the anawtomy?”

“Nae jist stan’in’ still a’thegither.”

“That’s weel. Ye haena been fa’in’ asleep again ower the guddlet carcass o’ an auld pauper—hae ye?”

Alec stared. He had never told any one of his adventure in the dissecting-room.

“I saw ye, my man. But I wasna the only ane that saw ye. Ye micht hae gotten a waur fleg, gin I hadna come up, for Mr. Beauchamp was takin’ the bearin’s o’ ye throu the window, and whan I gaed up, he slippit awa’ like a wraith. There ye lay, wi’ yer heid back, and yer mou’ open, as gin you and the deid man had been tryin’ whilk wad sleep the soun’est. But ye hae ta’en to ither studies sin’ syne. Ye hae a fresh subjec—a bonnie young ane. The Lord hae mercy upo’ ye! The goddess o’ the rainbow hersel’s gotten a haud o’ ye, and ye’ll be seein’ naething but rainbows for years to come.—Iris bigs bonnie brigs, but they hae nowther pier, nor buttress, nor key-stane, nor parapet. And no fit can gang ower them, but her ain, and whan she steps aff, it’s upo’ men’s herts, and yours can ill bide her fit, licht as it may be.”

“What are ye propheseein’ at, Mr. Cupples?” said Alec, who did not more than half understand him.

“Verra weel. I’m no drunk yet,” rejoined Mr. Cupples, oracularly. “But that chield Beauchamp’s no rainbow—that lat me tell ye. He’ll do you a mischief yet, gin ye dinna luik a’ the shairper. I ken the breed o’ him. He was luikin’ at ye throu the window like a hungry deevil. And jist min’ what ye’re aboot wi’ the lassie—she ’s rael bonnie—or ye may chance to get her into

trouble, withoot ony wyte (*fault*) o' yer ain. Min' I'm tellin' ye. Gin ye'll tak my advice, ye'll tak a dose o' mathematics direckly. It's a fine alterative as weel as antidote, though maybe whusky's the verra broo o' the deevil's ain pot," he concluded, altering his tone entirely, and swallowing the rest of his glass at a gulp.

"What do you want me to do?" asked Alec.

"To tak tent (*care*) o' Beauchamp. And meantime to rin doon for yer Euclid and yer Hutton, and lat's see whaur ye are."

There was more ground for Mr. Cupples's warning than Alec had the smallest idea of. He had concluded long ago that all possible relations, even those of enmity—practical enmity at least—were over between them, and that Mr. Beauchamp considered the bejan sufficiently punished for thrashing him, by being deprived of his condescending notice for the rest of the ages. But so far was this from being the true state of the case, that, although Alec never suspected it, Beauchamp had in fact been dogging and haunting him from the very commencement of the session, and Mr. Cupples had caught him in only one of many acts of the kind. In the anatomical class, where they continued to meet, he still attempted to keep up the old look of disdain, as if the lesson he had received had in no way altered their relative posi-

tion. Had Alec known with what difficulty, and under what a load of galling recollection, he kept it up, he would have been heartily sorry for him. Beauchamp's whole consciousness was poisoned by the memory of that day. Incapable of regarding any one except in comparative relation to himself, the effort of his life had been to maintain that feeling of superiority with which he started every new acquaintance; for occasionally a flash of foreign individuality would break through the husk of satisfaction in which he had inclosed himself, compelling him to feel that another man might have claims. And hitherto he had been very successful in patching up and keeping entire his eggshell of conceit. But that affair with Alec was a very bad business. Had Beauchamp been a coward, he would have suffered less from it. But he was no coward, though not quite so courageous as Hector, who yet turned and fled before Achilles. Without the upholding sense of duty, no man can be sure of his own behaviour, simply because he cannot be sure of his own nerves. Duty kept the red-cross knight "forlorne and left to losse," "haplesse and eke hopelesse,"

"Disarmd, disgraste, and inwardly dismayde,
And eke so faint in every joynt and vayne,"

from turning his back on the giant Orgoglio, and

sent him pacing towards him with feeble steps instead. But although he was not wanting in mere animal courage, Beauchamp's pride always prevented him from engaging in any contest in which he was not sure of success, the thought of failure being to him unendurable. When he found that he had miscalculated the probabilities, he was instantly dismayed; and the blow he received on his mouth reminding his vanity of the danger his handsome face was in, he dropped his arms and declined further contest, comforting himself with the fancy of postponing his vengeance to a better opportunity.

But within an hour he knew that he had lost his chance, as certainly as he who omits the flood-tide of his fortune. He not only saw that he was disgraced, but felt in himself that he had been cowardly; and, more mortifying still, felt that, with respect to the clodhopper, he was cowardly now. He was afraid of him. Nor could he take refuge in the old satisfaction of despising him; for that he found no longer possible. He was on the contrary compelled to despise himself, an experience altogether new; so that his contempt for Alec changed into a fierce, slow-burning hate.

Now hate keeps its object present even more than the opposite passion. Love makes every thing lovely; hate concentrates itself on the one

thing hated. The very sound of Alec's voice became to the ears of Beauchamp what a filthy potion would have been to his palate. Every line of his countenance became to his eyes what a disgusting odour would have been to his nostrils. And yet the fascination of his hate, and his desire of revenge, kept Beauchamp's ears, eyes, and thoughts hovering about Forbes.

No way of gratifying his hatred, however, although he had been brooding over it all the previous summer, had presented itself till now. Now he saw the possibility of working a dear revenge. But even now, to work surely, he must delay long. Still the present consolation was great.

Nor is it wonderful that his pride should not protect him from the deeper disgrace of walking in underground ways. For there is nothing in the worship of self to teach a man to be noble. Honour even will one day fail him who has learned no higher principle. And although revenge be "a kind of wild justice," it loses the justice, and retains only the wildness when it corrupts into hatred. Every feeling that Beauchamp had was swallowed up in the gulf eaten away by that worst of all canker-worms.

Notwithstanding the humiliation he had experienced, he retained as yet an unlimited confidence in some gifts which he supposed him-

self to possess by nature, and to be capable of using with unequalled art. And true hate, as well as true love, knows how to wait.

CHAPTER XI.

IN the course of her study of Milton, Annie had come upon Samson's lamentation over his blindness; and had found, soon after, the passage in which Milton, in his own person, bewails the loss of light. The thought that she would read them to Tibbie Dyster was a natural one. She borrowed the volumes from Mrs. Forbes; and, the next evening, made her way to Tibbie's cottage, where she was welcomed as usual by her gruff voice of gratefulness.

"Ye're a gude bairn to come a' this gait through the snaw to see an auld blin' body like me. It's dingin' on (*snowing or raining*)—is na 't, bairn?"

"Ay is't. Hoo do ye ken, Tibbie?"

"I dinna ken hoo I ken. I was na sure. The snaw maks unco little din, ye see. It comes doon like the speerit himsel' upo' quaiet herts."

"Did ye ever see, Tibbie?" asked Annie, after a pause.

“Na; nae that I min’ upo’. I was but twa year auld, my mither used to tell fowk, whan I had the pock, an’ it jist closed up my een for ever—i’ this warl, ye ken. I s’ see some day as weel’s ony o’ ye, lass.”

“Do ye ken what licht is, Tibbie?” said Annie, whom Milton had set meditating on Tibbie’s physical in relation to her mental condition.

“Ay, weel eneuch,” answered Tibbie, with a touch of indignation at the imputed ignorance. “What for no? What gars ye spier?”

“Ow! I jist wanted to ken.”

“Hoo could I no ken? Disna the Saviour say: ‘I am the licht o’ the warl?’—He that walketh in Him maun ken what licht is, lassie. Syne ye hae the licht in yersel—in yer ain hert; an’ ye maun ken what it is. Ye canna mistak’ it.”

Annie was neither able nor willing to enter into an argument on the matter, although she was not satisfied. She would rather think than dispute about it. So she changed the subject in a measure.

“Did ye ever hear o’ John Milton, Tibbie?” she asked.

“Ow! ay. He was blin’ like mysel’, wasna he?”

“Ay, was he. I hae been readin’ a heap o’ his poetry.”

“Eh ! I wad richt weel like to hear a bittie o’ ’t.”

“Weel, here ’s a bit ’at he made as gin Samson was sayin’ o’ ’t, till himsel’ like, efter they had pitten oot ’s een—the Phillisteens, ye ken.”

“Ay, I ken weel enouch. Read it.”

Annie read the well-known passage. Tibbie listened to the end, without word of remark or question, her face turned towards the reader, and her sightless balls rolling under their closed lids. When Annie’s voice ceased, she said, after a little reflection :

“Ay ! ay ! It ’s bonnie, an’ verra true. And, puir man ! it was waur for him nor for me and Milton ; for it was a’ his ain wyte ; and it was no to be expecket he cud be sae quaiet as anither. But he had no richt to queston the ways o’ the Maker. But it ’s bonnie, rael bonnie.”

“Noo, I ’ll jist read to ye what Milton says about his ain blin’ness. But it ’s some ill to unnerstan’.”

“Maybe I ’ll unnerstan’ ’t better nor you, bairn. Read awa’.”

So admonished, Annie read. Tibbie fidgeted about on her seat. It was impossible either should understand it. And the proper names were a great puzzle to them.

“Tammy Riss !” said Tibbie ; “I ken naething about *him*.”

"Na, neither do I," said Annie; and beginning the line again, she blundered over "*blind Maeonides*."

"Ye 're readin' 't wrang, bairn. It sud be '*nae ony days*,' for there 's nae days or nights either to the blin'. They dinna ken the differ, ye see."

"I 'm readin' 't as I hae 't," answered Annie. "It 's a muckle M."

"I ken naething aboot yer muckle or yer little Ms," retorted Tibbie, with indignation. "Gin that binna what it means, it 's ayont me. Read awa'. Maybe we 'll come to something better."

"Ay will we?" said Annie, and resumed.

With the words, "*Thus with the year seasons return*," Tibbie's attention grew fixed; and when the reader came to the passage,

"So much the rather thou, Celestial Light,
Shine inward,"

her attention rose into rapture.

"Ay, ay, lassie! That man kent a' aboot it! He wad never hae speired gin a blin' crater like me kent what the licht was. He kent what it was weel. Ay did he!"

"But, ye see, he was a gey auld man afore he tint his eesicht," Annie ventured to interpose.

"Sae muckle the better! He kent baith kinds.

And he kent that the sicht without the een is better nor the sicht o' the een. Fowk nae doobt has baith; but I think whiles 'at the Lord gies a grainy mair o' the inside licht to mak' up for the loss o' the ootside; and weel I wat it doesna want muckle to do that."

"But ye dinna ken what it is," objected Annie, with unnecessary persistency in the truth.

"Do ye tell me that again?" returned Tibbie, harshly. "Ye 'll anger me, bairn. Gin ye kent hoo I lie awauk at nicht, no able to sleep for thinkin' 'at the day *will* come whan I 'll see—wi' my ain open een—the verra face o' him that bore oor griefs an' carried oor sorrows, till I jist lie and greit, for verra wissin', ye wadna say 'at I dinna ken what the sicht o' a body's een is. Sae nae mair o' that! I beg o' ye, or I 'll jist need to gang to my prayers to haud me ohn been angry wi' ane o' the Lord's bairns; for that ye *are*, I do believe, Annie Anderson. Ye canna ken what blin'ness is; but I doobt ye ken what the licht is, lassie; and, for the lave (*rest*), jist ye lippen (*trust*) to John Milton and me."

Annie dared not say another word. She sat silent—perhaps rebuked. But Tibbie resumed:

"Ye maunna think, hooever, 'cause sic longin' thoughts come ower me, that I gang aboot the hoose girnin' and compleenin' that I canna open

the door and win oot. Na, na. I could jist despise the licht, whiles, that ye mak' sic a wark about, and sing and shout, as the Psalmist says; for I'm jist that glaid, that I dinna ken hoo to haud it in. For the Lord's my frien'. I can jist tell him a' that comes into my puir blin' heid. Ye see there's ithers ways for things to come intil a body's heid. There's mair doors nor the een. There's back doors whiles, that lat ye oot to the bonnie gairden, and that's better nor the road-side. And the smell o' the braw flooers comes in at the back winnocks, ye ken.—Whilk o' the bonnie flooers do ye think likest *Him*, Annie Anderson?"

"Eh! I dinna ken, Tibbie. I'm thinkin' they maun be a' like him."

"Ay, ay, nae doot. But some o' them may be liker him nor ithers."

"Weel, whilk do ye think likest him, Tibbie?"

"I think it maun be the minnonette—sae clean and sae fine and sae weel content."

"Ay, ye're speiken by the smell, Tibbie. But gin ye saw the rose—"

"Hoots! I hae seen the rose mony a time. Nae doobt it's bonnier to luik at—" and here her fingers went moving about as if they were feeling the full-blown sphere of a rose—"but I think, for my pairt, that the minnonette's likest *Him*."

"May be," was all Annie's reply, and Tibbie went on.

"There maun be faces liker him nor ithers. Come here, Annie, and lat me fin (*feel*) whether ye be like him or no."

"Hoo can ye ken that?—ye never saw him."

"Never saw him! I hae seen him ower and ower again. I see him whan I like. Come here, I say."

Annie went and knelt down beside her, and the blind woman passed her questioning fingers in solemn silence over and over the features of the child. At length, with her hands still resting upon Annie's head, she uttered her judgment.

"Ay. Some like him, nae doot. But she'll be a heap liker him whan she sees him as he is."

When a Christian proceeds to determine the rightness of his neighbour by his approximation to his fluctuating ideal, it were well if the judgment were tempered by such love as guided the hands of blind Tibbie over the face of Annie in their attempt to discover whether or not she was like the Christ of her visions.

"Do ye think *ye're* like him, Tibbie?" said Annie with a smile, which Tibbie at once detected in the tone.

"Hoots, bairn! I had the pock dreidfu', ye ken."

“Weel, maybe we a’ hae had something or ither that hauds us ohn been sae bonny as we nicht hae been. For ae thing, there’s the guilt o’ Adam’s first sin, ye ken.”

“Verra richt, bairn. Nae doot that’s blaudit mony a face—‘the want o’ original richteousness, and the corruption o’ our whole natur’. The wonner is that we’re like him at a’. But we maun be like him, for he was a man born o’ a wumman. Think o’ that, lass!”

At this moment the latch of the door was lifted, and in walked Robert Bruce. He gave a stare when he saw Annie, for he had thought her out of the way at Howglen, and said in a tone of asperity,

“Ye’re a’ gait at ance, Annie Anderson. A doonricht rintheroot!”

“Lat the bairn be, Maister Bruce,” said Tibbie. “She’s doin’ the Lord’s will, whether ye may think it or no. She’s visitin’ them ’at’s i’ the prison-hoose o’ the dark. She’s ministerin’ to them ’at hae mony preeviledges nae doot, but hae room for mair.”

“I’m no saying naething,” said Bruce.

“Ye are sayin’. Ye’re offendin’ ane o’ his little anes. Tak ye tent o’ the millstane.”

“Hoot toot! Tibbie. I was only wissin’ at she wad keep a sma’ pairt o’ her ministrations for her ain hame and her ain fowk ’at has the ministerin’ to

her. There's the mistress and me jist mairtyrs to that chop! And there's the bit infant in want o' some *ministration* noo and than, gin that be what ye ca' 't."

A grim compression of the mouth was all Tibbie's reply. She did not choose to tell Robert Bruce that although she was blind—and probably *because* she was blind—she heard rather more gossip than anybody else in Glamerton, and that consequently his appeal to her sympathy had no effect upon her. Finding she made no other answer, Bruce turned to Annie.

"Noo, Annie," said he, "ye're nae wantit here ony langer. I hae a word or twa to say to Tibbie. Gang hame and learn yer lessons for the morn."

"It's Setterday nicht," answered Annie.

"But ye hae yer lessons to learn for the Monon-day."

"Ow ay! But I hae a buik or twa to tak' hame to Mistress Forbes. And I daursay I'll bide, and come to the kirk wi' her i' the mornin'."

Now, although all that Bruce wanted was to get rid of her, he went on to oppose her; for common-minded people always feel that they give the enemy an advantage if they show themselves content.

"It's no safe to rin about i' the mirk (*dark*). It's dingin' on forbye. Ye'll be a' wat, and maybe

fa' into the dam. Ye couldna see yer han' afore yer face—ance oot o' the toon."

"I ken the road to Mistress Forbes's as weel's the road up your garret-stairs, Mr. Bruce."

"Ow nae doobt!" he answered, with a sneering acerbity peculiar to him, in which his voice seemed sharpened and concentrated to a point by the contraction of his lips. "And there's tykes about," he added, remembering Annie's fear of dogs.

But by this time Annie, gentle as she was, had got a little angry.

"The Lord 'll tak care o' me frae the dark and the tykes, and the lave o' ye, Mr. Bruce," she said.

And bidding Tibbie good night, she took up her books, and departed, to wade through the dark and the snow, trembling lest some unseen *tyke* should lay hold of her as she went.

As soon as she was gone, Bruce proceeded to make himself agreeable to Tibbie by retailing all the bits of gossip he could think of. While thus engaged, he kept peering earnestly about the room from door to chimney, turning his head on every side, and surveying as he turned it. Even Tibbie perceived, from the changes in the sound of his voice, that he was thus occupied.

"Sae your auld landlord's deid, Tibbie!" he said at last.

“Ay, honest man! He had aye a kin’ word for a poor body.”

“Ay, ay, nae doobt. But what wad ye say gin I tell’t ye that I had boucht the bit hoosie, and was yer new landlord, Tibbie?”

“I wad say that the door-sill wants men’in’, to haud the snaw oot; an’ the bit hoosie’s sair in want o’ new thack. The verra cupples’ll be rottit awa’ or lang.”

“Weel that’s verra rizzonable, nae doobt, gin a’ be as ye say.”

“Be as I say, Robert Bruce?”

“Ay, ay; ye see ye’re nae a’thegither like ither fowk. I dinna mean ony offence, ye ken, Tibbie; but ye haena the sicht o’ yer een.”

“Maybe I haena the feelin’ o’ my auld banes, aither, Maister Bruce! Maybe I’m ower blin’ to hae the rheumatize; or to smell the auld weet thack whan there’s been a scatterin’ o’ snaw or a drappy o’ rain o’ the riggin’!”

“I didna want to anger ye, Tibbie. A’ that ye say deserves attention. It would be a shame to lat an auld body like you——”

“No that auld, Maister Bruce, gin ye kent the trowth!”

“Weel, ye’re no ower young to need to be ta’en guid care o’—are ye, Tibbie?”

Tibbie grunted.

“Weel, to come to the pint. There’s nae doobt the hoose wants a hantle o’ doctorin’.”

“’Deed does’t,” interposed Tibbie. “It’ll want a new door. For forbye ’at the door’s maist as wide as twa ordinar doors, it was ance in twa halves like a chop-door. And they ’re ill jined thegither, and the win’ comes throu like a knife, and maist cuts a body in twa. Ye see the bit hoosie was ance the dyer’s dryin’ hoose, afore he gaed further doon the watter.”

“Nae doobt ye’re richt, Tibbie. But seein’ that I maun lay oot sae muckle, I’ll be compelled to pit anither thrippence on to the rent.”

“Ither thrippence, Robert Bruce! That’s three thrippences i’ the ook in place o’ twa. That’s an unco rise! Ye canna mean what ye say! It’s a’ that I’m able to do to pay my saxpence. An auld blin’ body like me disna fa’ in wi’ saxpences whan she gangs luikin aboot wi’ her lang fingers for a pirn or a prin that she’s looten fa’.”

“But ye do a heap o’ spinnin’, Tibbie, wi’ thae lang fingers. There’s naebody in Glamerton spins like ye.”

“Maybe ay and maybe no. It’s no muckle that that comes till. I wadna spin sae weel gin it warna that the Almichty pat some sicht into the pints o’ my fingers, ’cause there was nane left i’

my een. An' gin ye mak ither thrippence a week oot o' that, ye'll be turnin' the water that He sent to ca my mill into your dam; an' I doot it'll play ill water wi' your wheels."

"Hoot, hoot! Tibbie, woman! It gangs sair against me to appear to be hard-hertit."

"I hae nae doobt. Ye dinna want to *appear* sae. But do ye ken that I mak sae little by the spinnin' ye mak sae muckle o', that the kirk alloos me a shillin' i' the week to mak up wi'? And gin it warna for kin' frien's, it's ill livin' I wad hae in dour weather like this. Dinna ye imaigne, Mr. Bruce, that I hae a pose o' my ain. I hae nae-thing ava, excep' sevenpence in a stockin'-fit. And it wad hae to come aff o' my tay or something ither 'at I wad ill miss."

"Weel, that may be a' verra true," rejoined Bruce; "but a body maun hae their ain for a' that. --Wadna the kirk gie ye the ither thrippence?"

"Do ye think I wad tak frae the kirk to pit into your till?"

"Weel, say saivenpence, than, and we'll be quits."

"I tell ye what, Robert Bruce: raither nor pay ye one bawbee more nor the saxpence, I'll turn oot i' the snaw, and lat the Lord luik efter me."

Robert Bruce went away, and did not purchase the cottage, which was in the market at a low

price. He had intended Tibbie to believe, as she did, that he had already bought it; and if she had agreed to pay even the sevenpence, he would have gone from her to secure it.

On her way to Howglen, Annie pondered on the delight of Tibbie—Tibbie Dyster who had never seen the “human face divine”—when she should see the face of Jesus Christ, most likely the first face she would see. Then she turned to what Tibbie had said about knowing light from knowing the Saviour. There must be some connexion between what Tibbie said, and what Thomas had said about the face of God. There was a text that said “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.” So she was sure that the light that was in a Christian, whatever it meant, must come from the face of God. And so what Thomas said and what Tibbie said might be only different ways of saying the same thing.

Thus she was in a measure saved from the perplexity which comes of any *one* definition of the holy secret, compelling a man to walk in a way between walls, instead of in a path across open fields.

There was no day yet in which Annie did not think of her old champion with the same feeling of devotion which his championship had first aroused, although all her necessities, hopes, and fears were

now beyond any assistance he could render. She was far on in a new path : he was loitering behind, out of hearing. He would not have dared to call her solicitude nonsense ; but he would have set down all such matters as belonging to women, rather than youths beginning the world. The lessons of Thomas Crann were not despised, for he never thought about them. He began to look down upon all his past, and, in it, upon his old companions. Since knowing Kate, who had more delicate habits and ways than he had ever seen, he had begun to refine his own modes concerning outside things ; and in his anxiety to be like her, while he became more polished, he became less genial and wide-hearted.

But none of his old friends forgot him. I believe not a day passed in which Thomas did not pray for him in secret, naming him by his name, and lingering over it mournfully—"Alexander Forbes—the young man that I thocht wad hae been pluckit frae the burnin' afore noo. But thy time's the best, O Lord. It's a' thy wark ; an' there's no good thing in us. And thou canst turn the hert o' man as the rivers o' water. And maybe thou hast gi'en him grace to repent already, though I ken naething about it."

CHAPTER XII.

THIS had been a sore winter for Thomas, and he had had plenty of leisure for prayer. For, having gone up on a scaffold one day to see that the wall he was building was properly protected from the rain, he slipped his foot on a wet pole, and fell to the ground, whence, being a heavy man, he was lifted terribly shaken, besides having one of his legs broken. Not a moan escaped him—a murmur was out of the question. They carried him home, and the surgeon did his best for him. Nor, although few people liked him much, was he left unvisited in his sickness. The members of his own religious community recognized their obligation to minister to him; and they would have done more, had they guessed how poor he was. Nobody knew how much he gave away in other directions; but they judged of his means by the amount he was in the habit of putting into the plate at the chapel-door every Sunday.

There was never much of the silvery shine to be seen in the heap of copper, but one of the gleaming sixpences was almost sure to have dropped from the hand of Thomas Crann. Not that this generosity sprung altogether from disinterested motives; for the fact was, that he had a morbid fear of avarice; a fear I believe not altogether groundless; for he was independent in his feelings almost to fierceness—certainly to ungraciousness; and this strengthened a natural tendency to saving and hoarding. The consciousness of this tendency drove him to the other extreme. Jean, having overheard him once cry out in an agony, “Lord, hae mercy upo’ me, and deliver me frae this love o’ money, which is the root of all evil,” watched him in the lobby of the chapel the next Sunday—“and as sure’s deith,” said Jean—an expression which it was well for her that Thomas did not hear—“he pat a siller shillin’ into the plate that day, mornin’ an’ nicht.”

“Tak’ care hoo ye affront him, whan ye tak’ it,” said Andrew Constable to his wife, who was setting out to carry him some dish of her own cooking—for Andrew’s wife belonged to the missionars—“for weel ye ken Thamas likes to be unner obligation to nane but the Lord himsel’.”

“Lea’ ye that to me, Anerew, my man. You ’at’s rouch men disna ken hoo to do a thing o’ that

sort. I s' manage Thamas weel eneuch. I ken the nater o' him."

And sure enough he ate it up at once, that she might take the dish back with her.

Annie went every day to ask after him, and every day had a kind reception from Jean, who bore her no grudge for the ignominious treatment of Thomas on that evening memorable to Annie. At length, one day, after many weeks, Jean asked her if she would not like to see him.

"Ay wad I; richt weel," answered she.

Jean led her at once into Thomas's room, where he lay in a bed in the wall. He held out his hand. Annie could hardly be said to take it, but she put hers into it, saying timidly,

"Is yer leg verra sair, Thamas?"

"Ow na, dawtie; nae noo. The Lord's been verra mercifu'—jist like himsel'." It was ill to bide for a while whan I cudna sleep. But I jist sleep noo like ane o' the beloved."

"I was richt sorry for ye, Thamas."

"Ay. Ye 've a kin' hert, lassie. And I canna help thinkin'—they may say what they like—but I canna help thinkin' that the Lord was sorry for me himsel'. It cam' into my heid as I lay here ae nicht, an' cudna sleep a wink, and cudna rist, and yet daurna mov for my broken hough. And as sune 's that cam' into my heid, I was sae upliftit,

'at I forgot a' aboot my leg, and begud, or ever I kent, to sing the hunner and saivent psalm. And syne whan the pain cam' back wi' a terrible stoon, I jist amaiست leuch; an I thought that gin he wad brack me a' to bits, I wad never cry *haud*, nor turn my finger to gar him stent. Noo, ye 're ane o' the Lord's bairns——"

"Eh! I dinna ken," cried Annie, half-terrified at such an assurance from Thomas, and the responsibility devolved on her thereby, and yet delighted beyond expression.

"Ay are ye," continued Thomas, confidently; "and I want to ken what ye think aboot it. Do ye think it was a wrang thocht to come into my heid?"

"Hoo could that be, Thomas, whan it set ye a singin'—and sic a psalm—'O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness?'"

"The Lord be praised ance mair!" exclaimed Thomas. "'Oot o' the mooth o' babes and sucklin's!'—no that ye're jist that, Annie, but ye're no muckle mair. Sit ye doon aside me, and rax ower to the Bible, and jist read that hunner and saivent psalm. Eh, lassie! but the Lord is guid. Oh! that men wad praise him! An' to care for the praises o' sic worms as me! What richt hae I to praise him?"

"Ye hae the best richt, Thomas; for hasna he been good to ye?"

“Ye ’re richt, lassie, ye ’re richt. It’s wonnerfu’ the common sense o’ bairns. Gin ye wad jist lat the Lord instruck them! I doobt we mak ower little o’ them. Nae doobt they ’re born in sin, and brocht furth in iniquity; but gin they repent ear’, they win far aheid o’ the auld fowk.”

Thomas’s sufferings had made him more gentle—and more sure of Annie’s election. He was one on whom affliction was not thrown away.—Annie saw him often after this, and he never let her go without reading a chapter to him, his remarks upon which were always of some use to her, notwithstanding the limited capacity and formal shape of the doctrinal moulds in which they were cast; for wherever there is genuine religious feeling and *experience*, it will now and then crack the prisoning pitcher, and let some brilliant ray of the indwelling glory out, to discomfit the beleaguering hosts of troublous thoughts.

Although the framework of Thomas was roughly hewn, he had always been subject to such fluctuations of feeling as are more commonly found amongst religious women. Sometimes, notwithstanding the visions of the face of God “vouchsafed to him from the mercy-seat,” as he would say, he would fall into fits of doubting whether he was indeed one of the elect; for how then could he be so hard-hearted, and so barren of good thoughts and

feelings as he found himself? At such times he was subject to an irritation of temper, alternately the cause and effect of his misery, upon which, with all his efforts, he was only capable yet of putting a very partial check. Woe to the person who should then dare to interrupt his devotions! If Jean, who had no foresight or anticipation of consequences, should, urged by some supposed necessity of the case, call to him through the door bolted against Time and its concerns, the saint who had been kneeling before God in utter abasement, self-contempt, and wretchedness, would suddenly wrench it open, a wrathful, indignant man, boiling brimful of angry words and unkind objurgations, through all which would be manifest, notwithstanding, a certain unhappy restraint. Having driven the enemy away in confusion, he would bolt his door again, and return to his prayers in two-fold misery, conscious of guilt increased by unrighteous anger, and so of yet another wall of separation raised between him and his God.

Now this weakness all but disappeared during the worst of his illness, to return for a season with increased force when his recovery had advanced so far as to admit of his getting out of bed. Children are almost always cross when recovering from an illness, however patient they may have

been during its severest moments; and the phenomenon is not by any means confined to children.

A deacon of the church, a worthy little weaver, had been half-officially appointed to visit Thomas, and find out, which was not an easy task, if he was in want of anything. When he arrived, Jean was out. He lifted the latch, entered, and tapped gently at Thomas's door—too gently, for he received no answer. With hasty yet hesitating imprudence, he opened the door and peeped in. Thomas was upon his knees by the fire-side, with his plaid over his head. Startled by the weaver's entrance, he raised his head, and his rugged leonine face, red with wrath, glared out of the thicket of his plaid upon the intruder. He did not rise, for that would have been a task requiring time and caution. But he cried aloud in a hoarse voice, with his two hands leaning on the chair, like the paws of some fierce rampant animal:

“Jeames, ye ’re takin’ the pairt o’ Sawtan upo ye, drivin’ a man frae his prayers!”

“Hoot, Thamas! I beg yer pardon,” answered the weaver, rather flurried; “I thought ye micht hae been asleep.”

“Ye had no business to think for yersel’ in sic a maitter. What do ye want?”

“I jist cam’ to see whether ye war in want o’ onything, Thamas.”

"I'm in want o' naething. Gude nicht to ye."

"But, railly, Thamas," expostulated the weaver, emboldened by his own kindness—"ye'll excuse me, but ye hae nae business to gang doon on yer knees, wi' yer leg in sic a weyk condection."

"I winna excuse ye, Jeames. What ken ye aboot my leg? And what's the use o' knees, but to gang doon upo'? Gang hame, and gang doon upo' yer ain, Jeames; and dinna disturb ither fowk that ken what theirs was made for."

Thus admonished, the weaver dared not linger. As he turned to shut the door, he wished the mason good night, but received no answer. Thomas had sunk forward upon the chair, and had already drawn his plaid over his head.

But the secret place of the Most High will not be entered after this fashion; and Thomas felt that he was shut out. It is not by driving away our brother that we can be alone with God. Thomas's plaid could not isolate him with his Maker, for communion with God is never isolation. In such a mood, the chamber with the shut door shuts out God too, and one is left alone with himself, which is the outer darkness. The love of the brethren opens the door into God's chamber, which is within ours. So Thomas—who was far enough from hating his brother, who would have struggled to his feet and limped to do him a ser-

vice, though he would not have held out his hand to receive one, for he was only good, not gracious—Thomas, I say, felt worse than ever, and more as if God had forgotten him, than he had felt for many a day. He knelt still and sighed sore.

At length another knock came, which although very gentle, he heard and knew well enough.

“Who’s there?” he asked, notwithstanding, with a fresh access of indignant feeling.

“Annie Anderson,” was the answer through the door, in a tone which at once soothed the ruffled waters of Thomas’s spirit.

“Come in,” he said.

She entered, quiet as a ghost.

“Come awa’, Annie. I’m glaid to see ye. Jist come and kneel doon aside me, and we’ll pray thegither, for I’m sair troubled wi’ an ill-temper.”

Without a word of reply, Annie kneeled by the side of his chair. Thomas drew the plaid over her head, took her hand, which was swallowed up in his, and after a solemn pause, spoke thus :

“O Lord, wha dwellest in the licht inaccessible, whom mortal eye hath not seen nor can see, but who dwellest with him that is humble and contrite of heart, and liftest the licht o’ thy coontenance upo’ them that seek it, O Lord,”—here the solemnity of the appeal gave way before the out-

bursting agony of Thomas's heart—"O Lord, dinna lat's cry in vain, this thy lammie, and me, thine auld sinner, but, for the sake o' him wha did no sin, forgive my sins and my vile temper, and help me to love my neighbour as mysel'. Lat Christ dwell in me and syne I shall be meek and lowly of heart like him. Put thy speerit in me, and syne I shall do richt—no frae mysel', for I hae no good thing in me, but frae thy speerit that dwelleth in us."

After this prayer, Thomas felt refreshed and hopeful. With slow labour he rose from his knees at last, and sinking into his chair, drew Annie towards him, and kissed her. Then he said,

"Will ye gang a bit eeran' for me, Annie?"

"That I will, Thomas. I wad rin mysel' aff o' my legs for ye."

"Na, na. I dinna want sae muckle rinnin' the nicht. But I wad be sair obleeged to ye, gin ye wad jist rin doon to Jeames Johnstone, the weyver, and tell him, wi' my coamliments, ye ken, that I'm verra sorry I spak' till him as I did the nicht; and I wad tak it richt kin' o' him, gin he wad come and tak a cup o' tay wi' me the morn's nicht, and we cud hae a crack thegither, and syne we cud hae worship thegither. And tell him he maunna think nae mair o' the way I spak' till him,

for I was troubled i' my min', and I'm an ill-nater'd man."

"I'll tell him a' that ye say," answered Annie, "as weel's I can min' 't; and I s' warran' I s' no forget muckle o' 't. Wad ye like me to come back the nicht and tell ye what he says?"

"Na, na, lassie. It'll be nearhan' time for ye to gang to yer bed. And it's a cauld nicht. I ken that by my leg. And ye see Jeames Johnstone's no an ill-nater'd man like me. He's a douce man, and he's sure to be weel-pleased and come till's tay. Na, na; ye needna come back. Guid nicht to ye, my dawtie. The Lord bless ye for comin' to pray wi' an ill-nater'd man."

Annie sped upon her mission of love through the murky streets and lanes of Glamerton, as certainly a divine messenger as any seraph crossing the blue empyrean upon level wing. And if any one should take exception to this, on the ground that she sought her own service and neglected home duties, I would, although my object has not been to set her forth as an exemplar, take the opportunity of asking whether to sleep in a certain house and be at liberty to take one's meals there, be sufficient to make it home, and the source of home-obligations—to indicate the will of God as to *the* region of one's labour, other regions lying open at the same time. Ought Annie to have

given her aid as a child where there was no parental recognition of the relationship—an aid whose value in the eyes of the Bruces would have consisted in the leisure it gave to Mrs. Bruce for ministering more devotedly in the temple of Mammon? I put the question, not quite sure what the answer ought to be.

CHAPTER XIII.

NOW that Kate had got a companion, Alec never saw her alone. But he had so much the better opportunity of knowing her. Miss Warner was a nice, open-eyed, fair-faced English girl, with pleasant manners, and plenty of speech; and although more shy than Kate—English girls being generally more shy than Scotch girls—was yet ready enough to take her share in conversation. Between the two, Alec soon learned how ignorant he was in the things that most interest girls. Classics and mathematics were not *very* interesting to himself, and anatomy was not available. He soon perceived that they were both fond of poetry; but if it was not the best poetry, he was incapable of telling them so, although the few lessons he had had were from a better mistress than either of them, and with some better examples than they had learned to rejoice in.

The two girls had got hold of some volumes of

Byron, and had read them together at school, chiefly after retiring to the chamber they shared together. The consequences were an unbounded admiration and a facility of reference, with the use of emotional adjectives. Alec did not know a single poem of that writer, except the one about the Assyrian coming down like a wolf on the fold.

Determined, however, not to remain incapable of sympathizing with them, he got copies of the various poems from the library of the college, and for days studied Byron and anatomy—nothing else. Like all other young men, he was absorbed, entranced, with the poems. Childe Harold he could not read, but the tales were one fairy region after another. Their power over young people is remarkable, but not more remarkable than the fact that they almost invariably lose this power over the individual, while they have as yet retained it over the race; for of all the multitude which does homage at the shrine of the poet few linger long, and fewer still, after the turmoil of life has yielded room for thought, renew their homage. Most of those who make the attempt are surprised—some of them troubled—at the discovery that the shrine can work miracles no more. The Byron-fever is in fact a disease belonging to youth, as the hooping-cough to childhood,—

working some occult good no doubt in the end. It has its origin, perhaps, in the fact that the poet makes no demand either on the intellect or the conscience, but confines himself to friendly intercourse with those passions whose birth long precedes that of choice in their objects—whence a wealth of emotion is squandered. It is long before we discover that far richer feeling is the result of a regard bent on the profound and the pure.

Hence the chief harm the poems did Alec, consisted in the rousing of his strongest feelings towards imaginary objects of inferior excellence, with the necessary result of a tendency to measure the worth of the passions themselves by their strength alone, and not by their character—by their degree, and not by their kind. That they were the forge-bellows, supplying the blast of the imagination to the fire of love in which his life had begun to be remodelled, is not to be counted among their injurious influences.

He had never hitherto meddled with his own thoughts or feelings—had lived an external life to the most of his ability. Now, through falling in love, and reading Byron, he began to know the existence of a world of feeling, if not of thought; while his attempts at conversation with the girls had a condensing if not crystallizing influence

upon the merely vaporous sensations which the poetry produced. All that was wanted to give full force to the other influences in adding its own, was the presence of the sultry evenings of summer, with the thunder gathering in the dusky air. The cold days and nights of winter were now swathing that brain, through whose aerial regions the clouds of passion, driven on many shifting and opposing winds, were hurrying along to meet in human thunder and human rain.

I will not weary my readers with the talk of three young people enamoured of Byron. Of course the feelings the girls had about him differed materially from those of Alec; so that a great many of the replies and utterances met like unskilful tilters, whose staves passed wide. In neither was the admiration much more than an uneasy delight in the vivid though indistinct images of pleasure raised by the magic of that "physical force of words" in which Byron excels all other English poets, and in virtue of which, I presume, the French persist in regarding Byron as our greatest poet, and in supposing that we agree with them.

Alec gained considerably with Kate from becoming able to talk about her favourite author, while she appeared to him more beautiful than ever—the changes in the conversation constantly bringing

out new phases on her changeful countenance. He began to discover now what I have already ventured to call the *fluidity* of her expression; for he was almost startled every time he saw her, by finding her different from what he had expected to find her. Jean Paul somewhere makes a lamentation over the fact that girls will never meet you in the morning with the same friendliness with which they parted from you the night before. But this was not the kind of change Alec found. She behaved with perfect evenness to him, but always *looked* different, so that he felt as if he could never know her quite—which was a just conclusion, and might have been arrived at upon less remarkable though more important grounds. Occasionally he would read something of Byron's; and it was a delight to him such as he had never known before, to see Kate's strangely beautiful eyes flash with actual visible fire as he read, or cloud over with mist and fill slowly with the dew of feeling. No doubt he took more of the credit than belonged to him—which was greedy, seeing poor Byron had none of the pleasure.

Had it not been for the help Mr. Cupples gave him towards the end of the session, he would have made a poor figure both in Greek and mathematics. But he was so filled with the phantasm

of Kate Fraser, that, although not insensible of his obligation to Mr. Cupples, he regarded it lightly ; and, ready to give his life for a smile from Kate, took all his kindness, along with his drunken wisdom, as a matter of course.

And when he next saw Annie and Curly, he did not speak to them quite so heartily as on his former return.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN one or two of his letters, which were never very long, Alec had just mentioned Kate; and now Mrs. Forbes had many inquiries to make about her. Old feelings and thoughts awoke in her mind, and made her wish to see the daughter of her old companion. The absence of Annie, banished once more at the suggestion of worldly prudence, but for whose quiet lunar smile not even Alec's sunny presence could quite make up, contributed no doubt to this longing after the new maiden. She wrote to Mr. Fraser, asking him to allow his niece to pay her a visit of a few weeks; but she said nothing about it to Alec. The arrangement happened to be convenient to Mr. Fraser, who wished to accept an invitation himself. It was now the end of April; and he proposed that the time should be fixed for the beginning of June.

When this favourable response arrived, Mrs.

Forbes gave Alec the letter to read, and saw the flush of delight that rose to his face as he gathered the welcome news. Nor was this observation unpleasant to her; for that Alec should at length marry one of her own people was a grateful idea.

Alec sped away into the fields. To think that all these old familiar places would one day be glorified by her presence! that the daisies would bend beneath the foot of the goddess! and the everlasting hills put on a veil of tenderness from the reflex radiance of her regard! A flush of summer mantled over the face of nature, the flush of a deeper summer than that of the year—of the joy that lies at the heart of all summers. For a whole week of hail, sleet, and “watery sunbeams” followed, and yet in the eyes of Alec the face of nature still glowed.

When, after long expectation, the day arrived, Alec could not rest. He wandered about all day, haunting his mother as she prepared his room for Kate, hurrying away with a sudden sense of the propriety of indifference, and hurrying back on some cunning pretext, while his mother smiled to herself at his eagerness and the transparency of his artifice. At length, as the hour drew near, he could restrain himself no longer. He rushed to the stable, saddled his pony, which was in nearly

as high spirits as himself, and galloped off to meet the mail. The sun was nearing the west; a slight shower had just fallen; the thanks of the thirsty earth were ascending in odour; and the wind was too gentle to shake the drops from the leaves. To Alec, the wind of his own speed was the river that bore her towards him; the odours were wafted from her approach; and the sunset sleepiness around was the exhaustion of the region that longed for her Cytheraeon presence.

At last, as he turned a corner of the road, there was the coach; and he had just time to wheel his pony about before it was up with him. A little gloved hand greeted him; the window was let down; and the face he had been longing for, shone out lovelier than ever. There was no inside passenger but herself; and, leaning with one hand on the coach-door, he rode alongside till they drew near the place where the gig was waiting for them, when he dashed on, gave his pony to the man, was ready to help her as soon as the coach stopped, and so drove her home in triumph to his mother.

Where the coach stopped, on the opposite side of the way, a grassy field, which fell like a mantle from the shoulders of a hill crowned with firs, sloped down to the edge of the road. From the coach, the sun was hidden behind a thick clump

of trees, but his rays, now red with rich age, flowed in a wide stream over the grass, and shone on an old Scotch fir which stood a yard or two from the highway, making its red bark glow like the pools which the prophet saw in the desert. At the foot of this tree sat Tibbie Dyster; and from her red cloak the level sun-tide was thrown back in gorgeous glory; so that the eyeless woman, who only felt the warmth of the great orb, seemed, in her effulgence of luminous red, to be the light-fountain whence that torrent of rubescence burst. From her it streamed up the stem and along the branches of the glowing fir; from her it streamed over the radiant grass of the up-sloping field away towards the western sun. But the only one who saw the splendour was a shoemaker, who rubbed his rosiny hands together, and felt happy without knowing why.

Alec would have found it difficult to say whether or not he had seen the red cloak. But from the shadowy side of it there were eyes shining upon him, with a deeper and truer, if with a calmer, or, say, colder devotion, than that with which he regarded Kate. The most powerful rays that fall from the sun are neither those of colour nor those of heat.—Annie sat by Tibbie's side—the side away from the sun. If the East and the West might take human shape—come forth in

their Oreads from their hill-tops, and meet half-way between—there they were seated side by side: Tibbie, old, scarred, blind Tibbie, was of the west and the sunset, the centre of a blood-red splendour; cold, gentle Annie, with her dark hair, blue eyes, and the sad wisdom of her pale face, was of the sun-deserted east, between whose gray clouds, faintly smiling back the rosiness of the sun's triumphal death, two or three cold stars were waiting to glimmer.

Tibbie had come out to bask a little, and, in the dark warmth of the material sun, to worship that sun whose light she saw in the hidden world of her heart, and who is the sun of all the worlds; to breathe the air, which, through her prison-bars, spoke of freedom; to give herself room to long for the hour when the loving Father would take her out of the husk which infolded her, and say to her: "*See, my child.*" With the rest of the travailing creation, she was groaning in hopeful pain—not in the pain of the mother, but in the pain of the child, soon to be forgotten in the following rest.

If my younger readers want to follow Kate and Alec home, they will take it for a symptom of the chill approach of "unlovely age," that I say to them: 'We will go home with Tibbie and Annie, and hear what they say. I like better to tell you

about ugly blind old Tibbie than about beautiful young Kate.—But you shall have your turn. Do not think that we old people do not care for what you care for. We want more than you want—a something without which what you like best cannot last.’

“What did the coach stop for, Annie, lass?” asked Tibbie, as soon as the mail had driven on.

“It ’s a lady gaein to Mistress Forbes’s at Howglen.”

“Hoo ken ye that?”

“’Cause Alec Forbes rade oot to meet her, and syne took her hame i’ the gig.”

“Ay! ay! I thought I heard mair nor the ordinar nummer o’ horse-feet as the coach cam’ up. He ’s a braw lad, that Alec Forbes—isna he?”

“Ay is he,” answered Annie, sadly; not from jealousy, for her admiration of Alec was from afar; but as looking up from purgatorial exclusion to the paradise of Howglen, where the beautiful lady would have all Mrs. Forbes, and Alec too, to herself.

The old woman caught the tone, but misinterpreted it.

“I doobt,” she said, “he winna get ony guid at that college.”

“What for no?” returned Annie. “I was at

the school wi' him, and never saw onything to fin' fau't wi'."

"Ow na, lassie. Ye had naething to do fin'in' fau't wi' him. His father was a douce man, an' maybe a God-fearin' man, though he made but sma' profession. I think we're whiles ower sair upo' some o' them that promises little, and maybe does the mair. Ye min' what ye read to me afore we cam' oot thegither, aboot the lad that said till's father, *I go not*; but afterwards he repented and gaed?"

"Ay."

"Weel, I think, we'll gang hame noo."

They rose, and went, hand in hand, over the bridge, and round the end of its parapet, and down the steep descent to the cottage at its foot, Tibbie's cloak shining all the way, but, now that the sun was down, with a chastened radiance. When she had laid it aside, and was seated on her low wooden chair within reach of her spinning-wheel,

"Noo," said Tibbie, "ye'll jist read a chapter till me, lassie, afore ye gang hame, and syne I's gang to my bed. Blin'ness is a sair savin' o' can'les."

She forgot that it was summer, when, in those northern regions, the night has no time to gather before the sun is flashing again in the east.

The chapter Annie chose was the ninth of St. John's gospel, about Jesus curing the man blind from his birth. When she had finished, Annie said,

"Michtna he cure you, Tibbie, gin ye spiered at him?"

"Ay micht he, and ay will he," answered Tibbie. "I'm only jist bidin' his time. But I'm thinkin' he'll cure me better yet nor he cured that blin' man. He'll jist tak' the body aff o' me a'thegither, and syne I'll see, no wi' een like yours, but wi' my haill speeritual body. Ye min' that verse i' the prophecees o' Ezakiel: I ken't weel by hert. It says: 'And their whole boady, and their backs, and their han's, and their wings, and the wheels, were full of eyes roon aboot, even the wheels that they four had.' Isna that a gran' text? I wiss Mr. Turnbull wad tak' it into his heid to preach frae that text sometime afore it comes, which winna be that lang, I'm thinkin'. The wheels'll be stoppin' at my door or lang."

"What gars ye think that, Tibbie? There's no sign o' deith aboot you, I'm sure," said Annie.

"Weel, ye see, I canna weel say. Blin' fowk somehoo kens mair nor ither fowk aboot things that the sicht o' the een has unco little to do wi'.

But never min'. I'm willin' to bide i' the dark as lang as He likes. It's eneuch for ony bairn to ken that its father's stan'in' i' the licht, and seein' a' about him, and sae weel able to guide hit, though it kensna whaur to set doon its fit neist. And I wat He's i' the licht. Ye min' that bit about the Lord pittin' Moses intil a clift o' the rock, and syne coverin' him wi' his han' till he was by him?"

"Ay, fine that," answered Annie.

"Weel, I canna help thinkin' whiles, that the dark about me's jist the how o' the Lord's han'; and I'm like Moses, only wi' this differ, that whan the Lord tak's his han' aff o' me, it'll be to lat me luik i' the face o' him, and no to lat me see only his back pairts, which was a' that he had the sicht o'; for ye see Moses was i' the body, and cudna bide the sicht o' the face o' God. I daursay it wad hae blin' 't him. I hae heard that ower muckle licht 'll ca fowk blin' whiles. What think ye, lassie?"

"Ay; the lichtnin' blin's fowk whiles. And gin I luik straucht at the sun, I can see nothing efter't for a whilie."

"I tell ye sae!" exclaimed Tibbie triumphantly. "And do ye min' the veesion that the apostle John saw in Pawtnios? I reckon he nicht hae thocht lang there, a' him lane, gin it hadna been for the

bonnie things, and the gran' things, and the terrible things 'at the Lord loot him see. They *war* gran' sights! It was the veesion o' the Saviour himsel'—Christ himsel'; and he says that his coontenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. What think ye o' that, lass!"

This was not a question, but an exulting exclamation. The vision in Patmos proved that although Moses must not see the face of God because of its brightness, a more favoured prophet might have the vision. And Tibbie, who had a share in the privileges of the new covenant, who was not under the law like Moses, but under grace like John, would one day see the veil of her blindness shrivel away from before her deeper eyes, burnt up by the glory of that face of God, which is a consuming fire.—I suppose that Tibbie was right in the main. But was it not another kind of brightness, a brightness without effulgence, a brightness grander and more glorious, shining in love and patience, and tenderness and forgiveness and excuse, that Moses was unfit to see, because he was not well able to understand it, until, ages after, he descended from heaven upon the Mount of Transfiguration, and the humble son of God went up from the lower earth to meet him there, and talk with him face to face as a man with his friend?

Annie went home to her garret. It was a singular experience the child had in the changes that came to her with the seasons. The winter with its frosts and bitter winds brought her a home at Howglen; the summer, whose airs were molten kisses, took it away, and gave her the face of nature instead of the face of a human mother. For the snug little chamber in which she heard with a quiet exultation the fierce rush of the hail-scattering tempest against the window, or the fluffy fall of the snow-flakes, like hands of fairy babies patting the glass, and fancied herself out in the careering storm, hovering on the wings of the wind over the house in which she lay soft and warm—she had now the garret room, in which the curtainless bed, with its bare poles, looked like a vessel in distress at sea, and through the roof of which the winds found easy way. But the winds were warm now, and through the skylight the sunbeams illuminated the floor, showing all the rat-holes and wretchedness of decay.

There was comfort out of doors in the daytime—in the sky and the fields and all the “goings-on of life.” And this night, after this talk with Tibbie, Annie did not much mind going back to the garret. Nor did she lie awake to think about the beautiful lady Alec had taken home with him.

And she dreamed again that she saw the Son

of Man. There was a veil over his face like the veil that Moses wore, but the face was so bright that it almost melted the veil away, and she saw what made her love that face more than the presence of Alec, more than the kindness of Mrs. Forbes or of Dowie, more than the memory of her father.

CHAPTER XV.

A LEC did not fall asleep so soon. The thought that Kate was in the house—asleep in the next room, kept him awake. Yet he woke the next morning earlier than usual. There were bands of golden light upon the wall, though Kate would not be awake for hours yet.

He sprung out of bed, and ran to the banks of the Glamour. Upon the cold morning stream the sunrays fell slanting and gentle. He plunged in, and washed the dreams from his eyes with a dive, and a swim under water. Then he rose to the surface and swam slowly about under the overhanging willows, and earthy banks hollowed by the river's flow into cold damp caves, up into the brown shadows of which the water cast a flickering shimmer. Then he dressed himself, and lay down on the meadow grass, each blade of which shadowed its neighbour in the slant sunlight. Cool as it still was with the coldness of the

vanished twilight, it yet felt warm to his bare feet, fresh from the waters that had crept down through the night from the high moor-lands. He fell fast asleep, and the sheep came and fed about him, as if he had been one of themselves. When he woke, the sun was high; and when he reached the house, he found his mother and Kate already seated at breakfast—Kate in the prettiest of cotton dresses, looking as fresh and country-like as the morning itself. The window was open, and through the encircling ivy, as through a filter of shadows, the air came fresh and cool. Beyond the shadow of the house lay the sunshine, a warm sea of brooding glory, of still power; not the power of flashing into storms of splendour beneath strange winds, but of waking up and cherishing to beauty the shy life that lay hidden in all remotest corners of the teeming earth.

“What are you going to do with Kate to-day, Alec?” said his mother.

“Whatever Kate likes,” answered Alec.

“I have no choice,” returned Kate. “I don’t know yet what I have to choose between. I am in your hands, Alec.”

It was the first time she had called him by his name, and a spear of sunshine seemed to quiver in his heart. He was restless as a hyena till she was ready. He then led her to the banks of the river,

here low and grassy, with plenty of wild flowers, and a low babblement everywhere."

"This is delightful," said Kate. "I will come here as often as you like, and you shall read to me."

"What shall I read? Would you like one of Sir Walter's novels?"

"Just the thing."

Alec started at full speed for the house.

"Stop," cried Kate. "You are not going to leave me alone beside this—talking water?"

"I thought you liked the water," said Alec.

"Yes. But I don't want to be left alone beside it. I will go with you, and get some work."

She turned away from the stream with a strange backward look, and they walked home.

But as Kate showed some disinclination to return to the river side, Alec put a seat for her near the house, in the shadow of a silver birch, and threw himself on the grass at her feet. There he began to read the *Antiquary*, only half understanding it, in the enchantment of knowing that he was lying at her feet, and had only to look up to see her eyes. At noon, Mrs. Forbes sent them a dish of curds, and a great jug of cream, with oat-cakes, and butter soft from the churn; and the rippling shadow of the birch played over the white curds and the golden butter as they ate.

Am I not now fairly afloat upon the gentle stream of an idyl? Shall I watch the banks as they glide past, and record each fairy-headed flower that looks at its image in the wave? Or shall I mow them down and sweep them together in a sentence?

I will gather a few of the flowers, and leave the rest. But first I will make a remark or two upon the young people.

Those amongst my readers who have had the happiness to lead innocent boy-lives, will know what a marvellous delight it was to Alec to have this girl near him in his own home and his own haunts. He never speculated on her character or nature, any more than Hamlet did about those of Ophelia before he was compelled to doubt woman-kind. His own principles were existent only in a latent condition, undeveloped from good impulses and kind sentiments. For instance: he would help any one whose necessity happened to make an impression upon him, but he never took pains to enter into the feelings of others—to understand them from their own point of view: he never had said to himself, “That is another me.”

Correspondent to this condition were some of Kate’s theories of life and its duties.

The question came up, whether a certain lady in fiction had done right in running away with her

lover. Mrs. Forbes made a rather decided remark on the subject. Kate said nothing, but her face glowed.

"Tell us what you think about it, Katie," said Mrs. Forbes.

Kate was silent for a moment. Then with the air of a martyr, from whom the rack can only extort a fuller confession of his faith—though I fear she had no deeper gospel at the root of it than Byron had brought her—she answered :

"I think a woman must give up every thing for love."

She was then precisely of the same opinion as Jean Paul's Linda in *Titan*.

"That is very true, I daresay," said Mrs. Forbes; "but I fear you mean only one kind of love. Does a woman owe no love to her father or mother because she has a lover?"

To this plain question Kate made no reply, but her look changed to one of obstinacy.

Her mother died when she was a child, and her father had kept himself shut up in his study, leaving her chiefly to the care of a Shetland nurse, who told her Scandinavian stories from morning to night, with invention ever ready to supply any blank in the tablets of her memory.

Alec thought his mother's opinion the more to be approved, and Kate's the more to be admired;

showing the lack of entireness in his nature, by thus dissociating the good and the admirable. That which is best cannot be less admirable than that which is not best.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE next day saw Alec walking by the side of Kate mounted on his pony, up a steep path to the top of one of the highest hills surrounding the valley. It was a wild hill, with hardly anything growing on it but heather, which would make it regal with purple in the autumn: no tree could stand the blasts that blew over that hill in winter. Having climbed to the topmost point, they stood and gazed. The country lay outstretched beneath in the glow of the June day, while around them flitted the cool airs of heaven. Above them rose the soaring blue of the June sky, with a white cloud or two floating in it, and a blue peak or two leaning its colour against it. Through the green grass and the green corn below crept two silvery threads, meeting far away and flowing in one—the two rivers which watered the valley of Strathglamour. Between the rivers lay the gray stone town, with its roofs of thatch and slate.

One of its main streets stopped suddenly at the bridge with the three arches above Tibbie's cottage; and at the other end of the bridge lay the green fields.

The landscape was not one of the most beautiful, but it had a beauty of its own, which is all a country or a woman needs; and Kate sat gazing about her in evident delight. She had taken off her hat to feel the wind, and her hair fell in golden heaps upon her shoulders, and the wind and the sunbeams played at hide-and-seek in it.

In a moment the pleasure vanished from her face. It clouded over, while the country lay full in the sun. Her eyes no longer looked wide abroad, but expressed defeat and retirement. Listlessly she began to gather her hair together.

"Do you ever feel as if you could not get room enough, Alec?" she said, wearily.

"No, I don't," he answered, honestly and stupidly. "I have always as much as I want. I should have thought you would—up here."

"I did feel satisfied for a moment; but it was only a moment. It is all gone now. I shall never have room enough."

Alec had nothing to say in reply. He never had anything to give Kate but love; and now he gave her more love. It was all he was rich in. But she did not care for his riches. And so,

after gazing a while, she turned towards the descent. Alec picked up her hat, and took his place at the pony's head. He was not so happy as he had thought he should be. Somehow she was of another order, and he could not understand her—he could only worship her.

The whole of the hot afternoon they spent on the grass, whose mottling of white clover filled the wandering airs with the odours of the honey of Hymettus. And after tea Kate sang, and Alec drank every tone as if his soul lived by hearing.

In this region the sun works long after hours in the summer, and they went out to see him go down weary. They leaned together over the gate and looked at the level glory, which now burned red and dim. Lamp of life, it burns all night long in the eternal night of the universe, to chase the primeval darkness from the great entrance hall of the "human mortals."

"What a long shadow everything throws!" said Kate. "When the shadows gather all together, and melt into one, then it is night. Look how the light creeps about the roots of the grass on the ridge, as if it were looking for something between the shadows. They are both going to die. Now they begin."

The sun diminished to a star—a spark of crimson

fire, and vanished. As if he had sunk in a pool of air, and made it overflow, a gentle ripple of wind blew from the sunset over the grass. They could see the grass bending and swaying and bathing in its coolness before it came to them. It blew on their faces at length, and whispered something they could not understand, making Kate think of her mother, and Alec of Kate.

Now that same breeze blew upon Tibbie and Annie, as they sat in the patch of meadow by the cottage, between the river and the *litster's dam*. It made Tibbie think of death, the opener of sleeping eyes, the lifter of hanging hands. For Tibbie's darkness was the shadow of her grave, on the further border of which the light was breaking in music. Death and resurrection were the same thing to blind old Tibbie.

When the gentle, washing wind blew upon Annie, she thought of the wind that bloweth were it listeth; and that, if ever the spirit of God blew upon her, she would feel it just like that wind of summer sunset—so cool, so blessed, so gentle, so living! And was it not God that breathed that wind upon her? Was he not even then breathing his spirit into the soul of that woman-child?

It blew upon Andrew Constable, as he stood in his shop-door, the easy labour of his day all but

over. And he said to his little weasel-faced, *douce*, old-fashioned child who stood leaning against the other door-cheek :

“That’s a fine caller bit blastie, Isie ! Dinna ye like to fin’ ’t blawin’ upo’ yer het cheeks, dawtie ?”

And she answered,

“Ay, I like it weel, daddie ; but it min’s me some upo’ the winter.”

And Andrew looked anxiously at the pale face of his child, who, at six years old, in the month of June, had no business to know that there was any winter. But she was the child of elderly parents, and had not been born in time ; so that she was now in reality about twenty.

It blew upon Robert Bruce, who had just run out into the *yard*, to see how his potatoes and cabbages were coming on. He said,

“It’s some cauld,” and ran in again to put on his hat.

Alec and Kate, I have said, stood looking into the darkening field. A great flock of rooks which filled the air with their rooky gossip, was flying straight home to an old gray ruin just visible amongst some ancient trees. They had been gathering worms and grubs all day, and now it was bed time. They felt, through all their black feathers, the coolness of that evening breeze which

came from the cloudy mausoleum already built over the grave of the down-gone sun.

Kate hearing them rejoicing far overhead, searched for them in the darkening sky, found them, and watched their flight, till the black specks were dissolved in the distance. They are not the most poetic of birds, but in a darkening country twilight, over silent fields, they blend into the general tone, till even their noisy caw suggests repose. But it was room Kate wanted, not rest. She would know one day, however, that room and rest are the same, and that the longings for both spring from the same need.

"What place is that in the trees?" she asked.

"The old Castle of Glamerton," answered Alec.

"Would you like to go and see it?"

"Yes; very much."

"We'll go to-morrow, then."

"The dew is beginning to fall, Kate," said Mrs. Forbes, who now joined them. "You had better come in."

Alec lingered behind. An unknown emotion drew his heart towards the earth. He would see her go to sleep in the twilight, which was now beginning to brood over her, as with the brown wings of a lovely dull-hued hen-bird. The daisies were all asleep, spotting the green grass with stars

of carmine; for their closed red tips, like the finger-points of two fairy hands, tenderly joined together, pointed up in little cones to keep the yellow stars warm within, that they might shine bright when the great star of day came to look for them. The light of the down-gone sun, the garment of Aurora, which, so short would be her rest, she had not drawn close around her on her couch, floated up on the horizon, and swept slowly northwards, lightly upborne on that pale sea of delicate green and gold, to flicker all night around the northern coast of the sky, and, streaming up in the heavens, melt at last in the glory of the uprisen Titan. The trees stood still and shadowy as clouds, but breathing out mysterious odours. The stars overhead, half-molten away in the ghostly light that would not go, were yet busy at their night-work, ministering to the dark sides of the other worlds. There was no moon. A wide stillness and peace, as of a heart at rest, filled space, and lying upon the human souls with a persistent quietness that might be felt, made them know what *might* be theirs. Now and then a bird sprang out with a sudden tremor of leaves, suddenly stilled. But the bats came and went in silence, like feelings yet unembodied in thoughts, vanishing before the sight had time to be startled at their appearing. All was marvel. And the

marvel of all was there—where the light glimmered faintly through the foliage. He approached the house with an awe akin to that with which an old poetic Egyptian drew near to the chamber of the goddess Isis.

He entered, and his Isis was laughing merrily.

In the morning, great sun-crested clouds with dark sides, hung overhead; and while they sat at breakfast, one of those glorious showers, each of whose great drops carries a sun-spark in its heart, fell on the walks with a tumult of gentle noises, and on the grass almost as silently as if it had been another mossy cloud. The leaves of the ivy hanging over the windows quivered and shook, each for itself, beneath the drops; and between the drops, one of which would have beaten him to the earth, wound and darted in safety a great humble bee.

Kate and Alec went to the open window and looked out on the rainy world, breathing the odours released from the grass and the ground. Alec turned from the window to Kate's face, and saw upon it a keen, yet solemn delight. But as he gazed, he saw a cloud come over it. The arched upper lip dropped sadly upon the other, and she looked troubled and cold. Instinctively he glanced out again for the cause. The rain had become thick and small, and a light opposing wind dis-

ordered its descent with broken and crossing lines.

This change from a summer to a winter rain had altered Kate's mood, and her face was now, as always, a reflex of the face of nature.

"Shut the window, please Alec," she said, with a shiver.

"We 'll have a fire directly," said Alec.

"No, no," returned Kate, trying to smile. "Just fetch me a shawl from the closet in my room."

Alec had not been in his own room since Kate came. He entered it with a kind of gentle awe, and stood just within the door, gazing as if rebuked.

From a pair of tiny shoes under the dressing-table, radiated a whole roomful of femininity. He was almost afraid to go further, and would not have dared to look in the mirror. In three days her mere presence had made the room marvellous.

Recovering himself, he hastened to the closet, got the shawl, and went down the stair three steps at a time.

"Couldn't you find it, Alec?" said Kate.

"Oh! yes; I found it at once," answered Alec, blushing to the eyes.

I wonder whether Kate guessed what made the

boy blush. But it does not matter much now. She did look curiously at him for a moment.

“Just help me with my shawl,” she said.

CHAPTER XVII.

DURING all this time, Annie had seen scarcely anything of her aunt Margaret Anderson. Ever since Bruce had offended her, on the occasion of her first visit, she had taken her custom elsewhere, and had never even called to see her niece. Annie had met her several times in the street, and that was all. Hence, on one of the fine afternoons of that unusually fine summer, and partly, perhaps, from missing the kindness of Mrs. Forbes, Annie took a longing to see her old aunt, and set out for Clippenstrae to visit her. It was a walk of two miles, chiefly along the high road, bordered in part by accessible plantation. Through this she loitered along, enjoying the few wild flowers and the many lights and shadows, so that it was almost evening before she reached her destination.

“Preserve’s a’! Annie Anderson, what brings ye here this time o’ nicht?” exclaimed her aunt.

“It’s a lang time sin I saw ye, auntie, and I wantit to see ye.”

“Weel, come butt the hoose. Ye’re growin’ a great muckle quean,” said her aunt, inclined to a favourable consideration of her by her growth.

Margaret “didna like bairns—menseless cratur—aye wantin’ ither fowk to do for them!” But growth was a kind of regenerating process in her eyes, and when a girl began to look like a woman, she regarded it as an outward sign of conversion, or something equally valuable.—So she conducted her into the presence of her uncle, a little old man, worn and bent, with gray locks peeping out from under a Highland bonnet.

“This is my brither Jeames’s bairn,” she said.

The old man received her kindly, called her his dawtie, and made her sit down by him on a three-legged *creepie*, talking to her as if she had been quite a child, while she, capable of high converse as she was, replied in corresponding terms. Her great-aunt was confined to her bed with rheumatism. Supper was preparing, and Annie was not sorry to have a share, for indeed, during the summer, her meals were often scanty enough. While they ate, the old man kept helping her to the best, talking to her all the time.

“Will ye no come and bide wi’ me, dawtie?” he said, meaning little by the question.

“Na, na,” answered Margaret for her. “She’s at the schule, ye ken, uncle, and we maunna interfere wi’ her schoolin’.—Hoo does that leein’ ted, Robert Bruce, carry himsel’ to ye, bairn?”

“Ow! I jist never min’ him,” answered Annie.

“Weel, it’s a’ he deserves at your han’. But gin I war you, I wad let him ken that gin he saws your corn ye hae a richt to raither mair nor his gleanins.”

“I dinna ken what ye mean,” answered Annie.

“Ow! na; I daursay no. But ye may jist as weel ken noo, that that ted, Robert Bruce, has twa hunner poun’ odd o’ yer ain, lassie; and gin he doesna use ye weel, ye can jist tell him ’at I telt ye sae.”

This piece of news had not the overpowering effect upon Annie which, perhaps, her aunt had expected. No doubt the money seemed in her eyes a limitless fortune; but then Bruce had it. She might as soon think of robbing a bear of her whelps as getting her own from Bruce. Besides, what could she do with it if she had it? And she had not yet acquired the faculty of loving money for its own sake. When she rose to take her leave, she felt little richer than when she entered, save for the kind words of John Peterson.

“It’s ower late for ye to gang hame yer lane, dawtie,” said the old man.

"I'm nae that fleyt," answered Annie.

"Weel, gin ye walk wi' Him, the mirk 'll be licht aboot ye," said he, taking off his Highland bonnet, and looking up with a silent recognition of the care of *Him*. "Be a gude lass," he resumed, replacing his bonnet, "an' rin hame as fest's ye can. Gude nicht to ye, dawtie."

Rejoicing as if she had found her long-lost home, Annie went out into the deep gloamin feeling it impossible she should be frightened at anything. But when she came to the part of the road bordered with trees, she could not help fancying she saw a figure flitting along from tree to tree just within the deeper dusk of the wood, and as she hurried on, fancy grew to fear. Presently she heard awful sounds, like the subdued growlings of wild beasts. She would have taken to her heels in terror, but she reflected that thereby she would only ensure pursuit, whereas she might slip away unperceived. As she reached a stile leading into the wood, however, a dusky figure came bounding over it, and advanced towards her. To her relief, it went on two legs; and when it came nearer she thought she recognized some traits of old acquaintance about it. When it was within a couple of yards of her, as she still pursued her way towards Glamerton, she stopped and cried out joyfully :

“Curly!”—for it was her old vice-champion.

“Annie!” was the equally joyful response.

“I thocht ye was a wild beast!” said Annie.

“I was only growlin’ for fun to mysel’,” answered Curly, who would have done it all the more, if he had known there was any one on the road. “I didna ken ’at I was fleggin’ onybody. An’ hoo are ye, Annie? An’ hoo’s Blister Bruce?”

For Curly was dreadfully prolific in nicknames.

Annie had not seen him for six months. He had continued to show himself so full of mischief, though of a comparatively innocent sort, that his father thought it better at last to send him to a town at some distance to learn the trade of a saddler, for which he had shown a preference.

This was his first visit to his home. Hitherto his father had received no complaints of his behaviour, and had now begged a holiday.

“Ye’re grown sair, Annie,” he said.

“Sae are ye, Curly,” answered Annie.

“An’ hoo’s Alec?”

“He’s verra weel.”

Whereupon much talk followed, which need not be recorded. At length Curly said :

“And hoo’s the rottans?”

“Ower weel and thrivin’.”

“Jist pit yer han’ i’ my coat-pooch, and see what I hae broucht ye.”

Knowing Curly’s propensities, Annie refused.

“It’s a wild beast,” said Curly. “I’ll lat it oot upo’ ye. It was it ’at made a’ that roarin’ i’ the plantin’.”

So saying, he pulled out of his pocket the most delicate tortoiseshell kitten, not half the beauty of which could be perceived in the gloamin, which is all the northern summer night. He threw it at Annie, but she had seen enough not to be afraid to catch it in her hands.

“Did ye fess this a’ the road frae Spinnie to me, Curly?”

“Ay did I, Annie. Ye see I dinna like rottans. But ye maun haud it oot o’ their gait for a feow weeks, or they’ll rive’t a’ to bits. It’ll sune be a match for them though, Is’ warran’. She comes o’ a killin’ breed.”

Annie took the kitten home, and it shared her bed that night.

“What’s that meowlin’?” asked Bruce the next morning, the moment he rose from the genuflexion of morning prayers.

“It’s my kittlin’,” answered Annie. “I’ll lat ye see’t.”

“We hae ower mony mou’s i’ the hoose, already,” said Bruce, as she returned with the little

peering baby-animal in her arms. "We hae nae room for mair. Here, Rob, tak the cratur, an' pit a tow about its neck, an' a stane to the tow, an' fling 't into the Glamour."

Annie, not waiting to parley, darted from the house with the kitten.

"Rin efter her, Rob," said Bruce, "an' tak' it frae her, and droon 't. We canna hae the hoose swarmin'."

Rob bolted after her, delighted with his commission. But instead of finding her at the door, as he had expected, he saw her already a long way up the street, flying like the wind. He started in keen pursuit. He was now a great lumbering boy, and although Annie's wind was not equal to his, she was more fleet. She took the direct road to Howglen, and Rob kept floundering after her. Before she reached the footbridge she was nearly breathless, and he was gaining fast upon her. Just as she turned the corner of the road, leading up on the other side of the water, she met Alec and Kate. Unable to speak she passed without appeal. But there was no need to ask the cause of her pale agonized face, for there was young Bruce at her heels. Alec collared him instantly.

"What are you up to?" he asked.

"Naething," answered the panting pursuer.

"Gin ye be efter naething, ye'll fin' that nearer hame," retorted Alec, twisting him round in that direction, and giving him a kick to expedite his return. "Lat me hear o' you troublin' Annie Anderson, an' I'll gar ye loup oot o' yer skin the neist time I lay han's upo' ye. Gang hame."

Rob obeyed like a frightened dog, while Annie pursued her course to Howglen, as if her enemy had been still on her track. Rushing into the parlour, she fell on the floor before Mrs. Forbes, unable to utter a word. The kitten sprung mewing out of her arms, and took refuge under the sofa.

"Mem, mem," she gasped at length, "tak' care o' my kittlin. They want to droon't. It's my ain. Curly gied it to me."

Mrs. Forbes comforted her, and readily undertook the tutelage. Annie was very late for school, for Mrs. Forbes made her have another breakfast before she went. But Mr. Malison was in a good humour that day, and said nothing. Rob Bruce looked devils at her. What he had told his father, I do not know; but whatever it was, it was all written down in Bruce's mental books to the debit of Alexander Forbes of Howglen.

Mrs. Forbes's heart smote her when she found to what persecution her little friend was exposed during those times when her favour was practically

although not really withdrawn; but she did not see how she could well remedy it. She was herself in the power of Bruce, and expostulation from her would be worth little; while to have Annie to the house as before would involve consequences unpleasant to all concerned. She resolved to make up for it by being kinder to her than ever as soon as Alec should have followed Kate to the precincts of the university; while for the present she comforted both herself and Annie by telling her to be sure to come to her when she found herself in any trouble.

But Annie was not one to apply to her friends except she was in great need of their help. The present case had been one of life and death. She found no further occasion to visit Mrs. Forbes before Kate and Alec were both gone.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ON a sleepy summer afternoon, just when the sunshine begins to turn yellow, Annie was sitting with Tibbie on the grass in front of her little cottage, whose door looked up the river. The cottage stood on a small rocky eminence at the foot of the bridge. Underneath the approach to it from the bridge, the dyer's mill-race ran by a passage cut in the rock, leading to the third arch of the bridge built over the Glamour. Towards the river, the rock went down steep to the little meadow. It was a triangular piece of smooth grass growing on the old bed of the river, which for many years had been leaving this side, and wearing away the opposite bank. It lay between the river, the dyer's race, and the bridge, one of the stone piers of which rose from it. The grass which grew upon it was short, thick, and delicate. On the opposite side of the river lay a field for bleaching the linen which was the chief manu-

facture of that country. Hence it enjoyed the privilege of immunity from the ploughshare. None of its daisies ever met the fate of Burns's

“Wee, modest, crimson-tippit flower.”

But indeed so constantly was the grass mown to keep it short, that there was scarcely a daisy to be seen in it, the long broad lines of white linen usurping their place, and in their stead keeping up the contrast of white and green. Around Tibbie and Annie however the daisies were shining back to the sun, confidently, with their hearts of gold and their rays of silver. And the butter-cups were all of gold; and the queen-of-the-meadow, which grew tall at the water-side, perfumed the whole region with her crown of silvery blossom. Tibbie's blind face was turned towards the sun; and her hands were busy as ants with her knitting needles, for she was making a pair of worsted stockings for Annie against the winter. No one could fit stockings so well as Tibbie.

“Wha's that comin', lassie?” she asked.

Annie, who had heard no one, glanced round, and, rising, said,

“It's Thomas Crann.”

“That's no Thomas Crann,” rejoined Tibbie.

“I dinna hear the host (*cough*) o' 'im.”

Thomas came up, pale and limping a little.

"That's no Thomas Crann?" repeated Tibbie, before he had time to address her.

"What for no, Tibbie?" returned Thomas.

"'Cause I canna hear yer breath, Thamas."

"That's a sign that I hae the mair o' 't, Tibbie. I'm sae muckle better o' that ashma, that I think whiles the Lord maun hae blawn into my nostrils anither breath o' that life that he breathed first into Edam an' Eve."

"I'm richt glaid to hear't, Thamas. Breath maun come frae him ae gait or ither."

"Nae doobt, Tibbie."

"Will ye sit doon asides's, Thamas? It's lang sin' I hae seen ye."

Tibbie always spoke of *seeing* people.

"Ay will I, Tibbie. I haena muckle upo' my han's jist the day. Ye see I haena won richt into my wark again yet."

"Annie an' me's jist been haein a crack thegither aboot this thing an' that thing, Thamas," said Tibbie, dropping her knitting on her knees, and folding her palms together. "Maybe *ye* could tell me whether there be ony likeness atween the licht that I canna see, and that soun' o' the water rinnin', aye rinnin', that I like sae weel to hear."

For it did not need the gentle warm wind, floating rather than blowing down the river that afternoon,

to bring to their ears the sound of the *entick*, or dam built across the river, to send the water to the dyer's wheel; for that sound was in Tibbie's cottage day and night, mingled with the nearer, gentler, and stronger gurgling of the swift, deep, *deedie* water in the race, that hurried, aware of its work, with small noise and much soft-sliding force towards the wheel.

"Weel, ye sec, Tibbie," answered Thomas, "it's nearhan' as ill for the like o' us to unnerstan' your blin'ness, as it may be for you to unnerstan' oor sicht."

"Deed maybe neyther o' 's kens muckle aboot oor ain gift either o' sicht or blin'ness.—Say onything ye like, gin ye dinna tell me, as the bairn here ance did, that I cudna ken what the licht was. I kenna what yer sicht may be, and I'm thinkin' I care as little. But weel ken I what the licht is."

"Tibbie, dinna be ill-nater'd, like me. Ye hae no call to that same. I'm tryin' to answer your queston. And gin ye interrup' me again, I'll rise an' gang hame."

"Say awa', Thamas. Never heed me. I'm some cankert whiles. I ken that weel eneuch."

"Ye hae nae business to be cankert, Tibbie?"

"Nae mair nor ither fowk."

"Less, Tibbie; less, woman."

“Hoo mak’ ye that oot?” asked Tibbie, defensively.

“Ye dinna see the things to anger ye that ither fowk sees.—As I cam’ doon the street this minute, I cam’ upo’ twa laddies—ye ken them—they’re twins—ane o’ them cripple——”

“Ay, that was Murdoch Malison’s wark!” interposed Tibbie, with indignant reminiscence.

“The man’s been sorry for’t, this mony a day,” said Thomas; “sae we maunna come ower’t again, Tibbie.”

“Verra weel, Thamas; Is’ haud my tongue. What about the laddies?”

“They war fechtin’ i’ the verra street; ruggin’ ane anither’s heids, an’ peggin’ at ane anither’s noses, an’ doin’ their verra endeevour to destroy the image o’ the Almichty—it wasna muckle o’ ’t that was left to blaud. I teuk and throosh them baith.”

“An’ what cam’ o’ the image o’ the Almichty?” asked Tibbie, with a grotesque contortion of her mouth, and a roll of her veiled eyeballs. “I doobt, Thamas,” she continued, “ye angert yersel’ mair nor ye quaietit them wi’ the thrashin’. The wrath o’ man, ye ken, Thamas, worketh not the richtyisness o’ God.”

There was not a person in Glamerton who would have dared to speak thus to Thomas Crann but Tibbie Dyster, perhaps because there was not

one who had such a respect for him. Possibly the darkness about her made her bolder; but I think it was her truth, which is another word for *love*, however unlike love the outcome may look, that made her able to speak in this fashion.

Thomas was silent for a long minute. Then he said :

“Maybe ye’re i’ the richt, Tibbie. Ye aye anger me; but I wad raither hae a body anger me wi’ tellin’ me the trowth, nor I wad hae a’ the fair words i’ the dictionar’. It’s a strange thing, wumman, but aye whan a body’s tryin’ maist to gang upricht, he’s sure to catch a dreidfu’ fa’. There I hae been warstlin’ wi’ my ill-temper mair nor ever I did i’ my life afore; and I never i’ my days lickit twa laddies for lickin’ ane anither till jist this verra day. And I prayed against mysel’ afore I cam’ oot. I canna win at the boddom o’ t.”

“There ’s waur’ things nor an ill temper, Thamas. No that it’s bonnie ava’. And it’s nane like Him ’at was meek and lowly o’ hert. But, as I say, there’s waur fauts nor an ill temper. It wad be no gain to you, Thamas, and no glory to Him whase will’s your sanctification, gin ye war to owercome yer temper, and syne think a heap o’ yersel’ that ye had done’t. Maybe that’s what for yer no allooed to be victorious in yer endeavours.”

“’Deed, maybe, Tibbie,” said Thomas solemnly. “And I’m some doobtfu’ forbye, whether I mayna be tryin’ to ripe oot the stockin’ frae the wrang en’ o’ ’t. I doobt the fau’t’s nae sae muckle i’ my temper as i’ my hert. It’s mair love that I want, Tibbie. Gin I lo’ed my neebor as mysel, I cudna be sae ill-natert till him; though ’deed, whiles, I’m angry eneuch at mysel’—a hantle waur nor at him.”

“Verra true, Thamas,” answered Tibbie. “Perfect love casteth oot fear, ’cause there’s nae room for the twa o’ them; and I daursay it wad be the same wi’ the temper.”

“But I’m no gaein’ to gie in to bein’ ill-natert for a’ that,” said Thomas, as if alarmed at the possible consequences of the conclusion.

“Na, na. Resist ye the deevil, Thamas. Haud at him, man. He’s sure to rin at the lang last. But I’m feared ye’ll gang awa’ ohn tellt me about the licht and the water. Whan I’m sittin’ here o’ the girse, hearkenin’ to the water, as it comes murrin’, and souffin’, and gurglin’, on to me, and syne by me and awa’, as gin it war spinnin’ and twistin’ a lot o’ bonnie wee sounies a’ intil ae muckle gran’ soun’, it pits me i’ min’ o’ the text that says, ‘His voice was as the sound o’ mony waters.’ Noo his face is licht—ye ken that, divna ye?—and gin his voice be like the water, there

maun be something like atween the licht and the water, ye ken. That's what garred me spier at ye, Thamas."

"Weel, I dinna ken richtly hoo to answer ye, Tibbie; but at this moment the licht's playin' bonnie upo' the entick—shimmerin' and brakin' upo' the water, as hit braks upo' the stanes afore it fa's. An' what fa's, it luiks as gin it took the licht wi' 't i' the wame o' 't like. Eh! it's bonnie, woman; and I wiss ye had the sicht o' yer een to see 't wi'; though ye do preten' to think little o' 't."

"Weel, weel! my time's comin', Thamas; and I maun jist bide till it comes. Ye canna help me, I see that. Gin I could only open my een for ae minute, I wad ken a' aboot it, and be able to answer mysel'.—I think we'll gang into the hoose, for I canna bide it langer."

All the time they were talking, Annie was watching Alec's boat, which had dropped down the river, and was floating in the sunshine above the dam. Thomas must have seen it too, for it was in the very heart of the radiance reflected to them from the watery mirror. But Alec was a painful subject with Thomas, for when they chanced to meet now, nothing more than the passing salute of ordinary acquaintance was exchanged. And Thomas was not able to be in-

dulgent to young people. Certain facts in his nature, as well as certain articles in his creed, rendered him unable. So, being one of those who never speak of what is painful to them if they can avoid it—thinking all the more, he talked about the light, and said nothing about the boat that was in the middle of it. Had Alec been rowing, Tibbie would have heard the oars; but he only paddled enough to keep the boat from drifting on to the dam. Kate sat in the stern looking at the water with half-closed eyes, and Alec sat looking at Kate, as if his eyes were made only for her. And Annie sat in the meadow, and she too looked at Kate; and she thought how pretty she was, and how she must like being rowed about in the old boat. It seemed quite an old boat now. An age had passed since her name was painted on it. She wondered if *The Bonnie Annie* was worn off the stern yet; or if Alec had painted it out, and put the name of the pretty lady instead. When Tibbie and Thomas walked away into the house, Annie lingered behind on the grass.

The sun sank slanting and slow, yet he did sink, lower and lower; till at length Alec leaned back with a stronger pull on the oars, and the boat crept away up the stream, lessening as it crept, and, turning a curve in the river, was lost. Still she sat on, with one hand lying listlessly in

her lap, and the other plucking blades of grass and making a little heap of them beside her, till she had pulled a spot quite bare, and the brown earth peeped through between the roots. Then she rose, went up to the door of the cottage, called a good night to Tibbie, and took her way home.

CHAPTER XIX.

MY story has not to do with city-life, in which occur frequent shocks, changes, and recombinations, but with the life of a country region; and is, therefore, "to a lingering motion bound," like the day, like the ripening of the harvest, like the growth of all good things. But clouds and rainbows will come in the quietest skies; adventures and coincidences in the quietest village.

As Kate and Alec walked along the street, on their way to the castle, one of the coaches from the county-town drove up with its four thoroughbreds.

"What a handsome fellow the driver is!" said Kate.

Alec looked up at the box. There sat Beauchamp, with the ribbons in his grasp, handling his horses with composure and skill. Beside him sat

the owner of the coach, a *laird* of the neighbourhood.

Certainly Beauchamp was a handsome fellow. But a sting went through Alec's heart. It was the first time that he thought of his own person in comparison with another. That she should admire Beauchamp, though he was handsome!

The memory even of that moment made him writhe on his bed years after; for a mental and a bodily wound are alike in this, that after there is but the scar of either left, bad weather will revive the torture. His face fell. Kate saw it, and did him some injustice. They walked on in silence, in the shadow of a high wall. Kate looked up at the top of the wall and stopped. Alec looked at her. Her face was as full of light as a diamond in the sun. He forgot all his jealousy. The fresh tide of his love swept it away, or at least covered it. On the top of the wall, in the sun, grew one wild scarlet poppy, a delicate transparent glory, through which the sunlight shone, staining itself red, and almost dissolving the poppy.

The red light melted away the mist between them, and they walked in it up to the ruined walls. Long grass grew about them, close to the very door, which was locked, that if old Time could not be kept out, younger destroyers might. Other walls

stood around, vitrified by fire—the remnants of an older castle still, about which Jamblichus might have spied the lingering phantoms of many a terrible deed.

They entered by the door in the great tower, under the spiky remnants of the spiral stair projecting from the huge circular wall. To the right, a steep descent, once a stair, led down to the cellars and the dungeon; a terrible place, the visible negations of which are horrid, and need no popular legends, such as Alec had been telling Kate, of a walled-up door and a lost room, to add to their influence. It was no wonder that when he held out his hand to lead her down into the darkness and through winding ways to the mouth of the far-off beehive dungeon—it was no wonder, I say, that she should shrink and draw back. A few rays came through the decayed planks of the door which Alec had pushed to behind them, and fell upon the rubbish of centuries sloping in the brown light and damp air down into the abyss. One larger ray from the keyhole fell upon Kate's face, and showed it blanched with fear, and her eyes distended with the effort to see through the gloom.

At that moment, a sweet, low voice came from somewhere, out of the darkness, saying:

“Dinna be feared, mem, to gang whaur Alec

wants ye to gang. Ye can lippen (*trust*) to *him*.'

Staring in the direction of the sound, Kate saw the pale face of a slender—half child, half maiden, glimmering across the gulf that led to the dungeon. She stood in the midst of a sepulchral light, whose faintness differed from mere obscuration, inasmuch as it told how bright it was out of doors in the sun. Annie, I say, stood in this dimness—a dusky and yet radiant creature, seeming to throw off from her a faint brown light—a lovely, earth-stained ghost.

"Oh! Annie, is that you?" said Alec.

"Ay is't, Alec," Annie answered.

"This is an old schoolfellow of mine," he said turning to Kate, who was looking haughtily at the girl.

"Oh! is it?" said Kate, condescending.

Between the two, each looking ghostly to the other, lay a dark cavern-mouth that seemed to go down to Hades.

"Wonna ye gang doon, mem?" said Annie.

"No, thank you," answered Kate, decisively.

"Alec 'll tak' guid care o' ye, mem."

"Oh! yes, I daresay; but I had rather not."

Alec said nothing. Kate would not trust him then! He would not have thought much of it, however, but for what had passed before. Would she have gone with Beauchamp if he had asked

her? Ah! if he had asked Annie, she too would have turned pale, but she would have laid her hand in his, and gone with him.

“Gin ye want to gang up, than,” she said, “I’ll lat ye see the easiest road. It’s roun’ this way.”

And she pointed to a narrow ledge between the descent and the circular wall, by which they could cross to where she stood. But Alec, who had no desire for Annie’s company, declined her guidance, and took Kate up a nearer though more difficult ascent to the higher level. Here all the floors of the castle lay in dust beneath their feet, mingled with fragments of chimney-piece and battlement. The whole central space lay open to the sky.

Annie remained standing on the edge of the dungeon-slope.

She had been on her way to see Tibbie, when she caught a glimpse of Kate and Alec as they passed. Since watching them in the boat the evening before, she had been longing to speak to Alec, longing to see Kate nearer: perhaps the beautiful lady would let her love her. She guessed where they were going, and across the fields she bounded like a fawn, straight as the crows flew home to the precincts of that “ancient rest,” and reached it before them. She did not need to fetch the key, for she knew a hole on the level of the grass, wide enough to let her creep through

the two yards of wall. So she crept in and took her place near the door.

After they had rambled over the lower part of the building, Alec took Kate up a small winding stair, past a succession of empty doorways like eyeless sockets, leading nowhither because the floors had fallen. Kate was so frightened by coming suddenly upon one after another of these defenceless openings, that by the time she reached the broad platform, which ran, all bare of parapet or battlement, around the top of the tower, she felt faint; and when Alec scampered off like a goat to reach the bartizan at the other side, she sank in an agony of fear upon the landing of the stair.

Looking down upon her from the top of the little turret, Alec saw that she was ill, and returning instantly in great dismay, comforted her as well as he could, and got her by degrees to the bottom. There was a spot of grass inside the walls, on which he made her rest; and as the sun shone upon her through one of the ruined windows, he stood so that his shadow should fall across her eyes. While he stood thus a strange fancy seized him. The sun became in his eyes a fiery dragon, which having devoured half of the building, having eaten the inside out of it, having torn and gnawed it everywhere, and having at length reached its

kernel, the sleeping beauty, whose bed had, in the long years, mouldered away, and been replaced by the living grass, would swallow her up anon, if he were not there to stand between and defend her. When he looked at her next, she had indeed become the sleeping beauty he had fancied her; and sleep had already restored the colour to her cheeks.

Turning his eyes up to the tower from which they had just descended, he saw, looking down upon them from one of the isolated doorways, the pale face of Patrick Beauchamp. Alec bounded to the stair, rushed to the top and round the platform, but found nobody. Beginning to doubt his eyes, his next glance showed him Beauchamp standing over the sleeping girl. He darted down the screw of the stair, but when he reached the bottom Beauchamp had again disappeared.

The same moment Kate began to wake. Her first movement brought Alec to his senses: why should he follow Beauchamp? He returned to her side, and they left the place, locked the door behind them, took the key to the lodge, and went home.

After tea, Alec, believing he had locked Beauchamp into the castle, returned and searched the building from top to bottom, even got a candle and a ladder, and went down into the dungeon, found no one, and went home bewildered.

While Alec was searching the vacant ruin,

Beauchamp was comfortably seated on the box of the Spitfire, tooling it half-way home—namely, as far as the house of its owner, the laird above mentioned, who was a relative of his mother, and whom he was then visiting. He had seen Kate and Alec take the way to the castle, and had followed them, and found the door unlocked. Watching them about the place, he ascended the stair from another approach. The moment Alec looked up at him, he ran down again, and had just dropped into a sort of well-like place which the stair had used to fill on its way to a lower level, when he heard Alec's feet thundering up over his head. Determined then to see what the lady was like, for he had never seen her close, or without her bonnet, which now lay beside her on the grass, he scrambled out, and, approaching her cautiously, had a few moments to contemplate her before he saw—for he kept a watch on the tower—that Alec had again caught sight of him, when he immediately fled to his former refuge, which communicated with a low-pitched story lying between the open level and the vaults.

The sound of the ponderous and rusty bolt reached him across the cavernous space. He had not expected their immediate departure, and was rather alarmed. His first impulse was to try whether he could not shoot the bolt from the in-

side. This he soon found to be impossible. He next turned to the windows in the front, but there the ground fell away so suddenly that he was many feet from it—an altogether dangerous leap. He was beginning to feel seriously concerned, when he heard a voice :

“Do ye want to win oot, sir? They hae lockit the door.”

He turned but could see no one. Approaching the door again, he spied Annie, in the dark twilight, standing on the edge of the descent to the vaults. He had passed the spot not a minute before, and she was certainly not there then. She looked as if she had just glided up that slope from a region so dark that a spectre might haunt it all day long. But Beauchamp was not of a fanciful disposition, and instead of taking her for a spectre, he accosted her with easy insolence :

“Tell me how to get out, my pretty girl, and I’ll give you a kiss.”

Seized with a terror she did not understand, Annie darted into the cavern between them, and sped down its steep into the darkness which lay there like a lurking beast. A few yards down, however, she turned aside, through a low doorway, into a vault. Beauchamp rushed after her, passed her, and fell over a great stone lying in the middle of the way. Annie heard him fall, sprung forth

again, and, flying to the upper light, found her way out, and left the discourteous knight a safe captive, fallen upon that horrible stair.—A horrible stair it was : up and down those steps, then steep and worn, now massed into an incline of beaten earth, had swarmed, for months together, a multitude of naked children, orphaned and captive by the sword, to and from the troughs at which they fed like pigs, amidst the laughter of the lord of the castle and his guests ; while he who passed down them to the dungeon beyond, had little chance of ever retracing his steps upward to the light.

Annie told the keeper that there was a gentleman shut into the castle, and then ran a mile and a half to Tibbie's cottage, without stopping. But she did not say a word to Tibbie about her adventure.

CHAPTER XX.

A SPIRIT of prophecy, whether from the Lord or not, was abroad this summer among the clergy of Glamerton, of all persuasions. Nor was its influences confined to Glamerton or the clergy. The neighbourhood and the laity had their share. Those who read their bibles, of whom there were many in that region, took to reading the prophecies, all the prophecies, and scarcely anything but the prophecies. Upon these every man, either for himself or following in the track of his spiritual instructor, exercised his individual powers of interpretation, whose fecundity did not altogether depend upon the amount of historical knowledge. But whatever was known, whether about ancient Assyria or modern Tahiti, found its theoretic place. Of course the Church of Rome had her due share of the application from all parties; but neither the Church of England, the Church of Scotland, nor either of the

dissenting sects, went without its portion freely dealt, each of the last finding something that applied to all the rest. There were some, however, who cared less for such modes, and, themselves given to a daily fight with antichrist in their own hearts, sought—for they too read the prophecies—to fix their reference on certain sins, and certain persons classed according to these their sins. With a burning desire for the safety of their neighbours, they took upon them the strongest words of rebuke and condemnation, so that one might have thought they were revelling in the idea of the vengeance at hand, instead of striving for the rescue of their neighbours from the wrath to come. Among these were Thomas Crann and his minister, Mr. Turnbull. To them Glamerton was the centre of creation, providence, and revelation. Every warning finger in The Book pointed to it; every burst of indignation from the labouring bosom of holy prophet was addressed to its sinners. And what the minister spoke to classes from the pulpit, Thomas, whose mode of teaching was in so far Socratic that he singled out his man, applied to the individual—in language occasionally too much to the point to admit of repetition in the delicate ears of the readers of the nineteenth century, some of whom are on such friendly terms with the vices themselves, that they are shocked at

the vulgarity and rudeness of the *names* given them by their forefathers.

“Ye ken weel eneuch that ye’re a drucken vratch, Peter Peterson. An’ ye ken weel eneuch that ye’re nane better, forbye, than ye sud be. Naebody ever accused ye o’ stealin’; but gin ye haud on as ye’re doin’, that’ll come neist. But I doobt the wrath o’ the Almichty ’ll be doon upo’ ’s like a spate, as it was i’ the days o’ Noah, afore ye hae time to learn to steal, Peter Peterson. Ye’ll hae *your* share in bringin’ destruction upo’ this toon, and a’ its belongin’s. The verra kirk-yard winna hide ye that day frae the wrath o’ Him that sitteth upo’ the throne. Tak ye tent, and repent, Peter; or it’ll be the waur for ye.”

The object of this terrible denunciation of the wrath of the Almighty was a wretched little object indeed, just like a white rabbit—with pink eyes, a grey face and head, poor thin legs, a long tail-coat that came nearly to his heels, an awfully ragged pair of trowsers, and a liver charred with whisky. He had kept a whisky-shop till he had drunk all his own whisky; and as no distiller would let him have any on trust, he now hung about the inn-yard, and got a penny from one, and twopence from another, for running errands.—Had they been sovereigns they would all have gone the same way—namely, for whisky.

He listened to Thomas with a kind of dazed meekness, his eyes wandering everywhere except in the direction of Thomas's. One who did not know Thomas would have thought it cowardly in him to attack such a poor creature. But Thomas was just as ready to fly at the greatest man in Glamerton. All the evil-doers of the place feared him—the rich manufacturer, and the strong horse-doctor included. They called him a wheezing, canting hypocrite, and would go streets out of their way to avoid him.

But on the present occasion he went too far with Peter.

“And it's weel kent your dochter Bauby's no better nor she sud be ; for——”

Peter's face flushed crimson, though where the blood could have come from was an anatomical mystery ; he held up his hands with the fingers crooked like the claws of an animal, for the poor creature had no notion of striking ; and, dancing backwards and forwards from one foot to the other, and grinning with set teeth in an agony of impotent rage, cried out :

“Tam Crann, gin ye daur to say anither word against my Bauby wi' that foul mou' o' yours, I'll—I'll—I'll—worry ye like a mad dog—ye ill-tongued scoonrel !”

His Bawby had already had two children—one

to the rich manufacturer, the other to the strong horse-doctor.

Thomas turned in silence and went away rebuked and ashamed. Next day he sent Peter a pair of old corduroy trowsers, into either leg of which he might have been buttoned like one of Paddy's twins.

In the midst of this commotion of mind and speech, good Mr. Cowie died. He had taken no particular interest in what was going on, nor even in the prophecies themselves. Ever since Annie's petition for counsel, he had been thinking as he had never thought before, about his own relation to God; and had found this enough without the prophecies. Now he had carried his thoughts into another world. While Thomas Craun was bending his spiritual artillery upon the poor crazy tub in which floated the earthly presence of Peter Peterson, Mr. Cowie's bark was lying stranded upon that shore whither the tide of time is slowly drifting each of us.

He was gently regretted by all—even by Thomas.

"Ay! ay!" he said, with slow emphasis, 'long drawn out'; "he's gane, is he, honest man? Weel, maybe he had the root o' the maitter in him, although it made unco little show aboon the yird. There was sma' flower and less fruit. But

jeedgement disna belang to us, ye see, Jean, lass."

Thomas would judge the living from morning to night ; but the dead—he would leave them alone in the better hands.

"I'm thinkin'," he added, "he's been taen awa' frae the evil to come—frae seein' the terrible consequences o' sic a saft way o' dealin' wi' eternal trowth and wi' perishin' men—taen awa' like Eli, whan he brak his neck at the ill news. For the fire and brimstane that overthrew Sodom and Gomorrhah, is, I doobt, hingin' ower this toon, ready to fa' and smore us a'."

"Hoot ! hoot ! dinna speyk sic awfu' words, Thamas. Ye 're nae the prophet Jonah, ye ken."

"Are ye the whaul than, to swallow me and my words thegither, Jean ? I tell ye the wrath o' God *maun* be roused against this toon, for it's been growin' waur and waur for mony a year ; till the verra lasses are no to be lippent oot them-lanes (*alone*)."

"What ken ye aboot the lasses, Thamas ? Haud ye to the men. The lasses are nae waur nor in ither pairts. I wat I can come and gang whan and whaur I like. Never a body says a word to me."

This was true but hardly significant ; seeing Jean had one shoulder and one eye twice the size

of the others, to say nothing of various obliquities and their compensations. But, rude as Thomas was, he was gentleman enough to confine his reply to a snort and a silence. For had he not chosen his housekeeper upon the strength of those personal recommendations of the defensive importance of which she was herself unaware?

Except his own daughters, there was no one who mourned so deeply for the loss of Mr. Cowie as Annie Anderson. She had left his church and gone to the missionars, and there found more spiritual nourishment than Mr. Cowie's sermons could supply, but she could not forget his kisses, or his gentle words, or his shilling, for by their means, although she did not know it, Mr. Cowie's self had given her a more confiding notion of God, a better feeling of his tenderness, than she could have had from all Mr. Turnbull's sermons together. What equal gift could a man give? Was it not worth bookfuls of sound doctrine? Yet the good man, not knowing this, had often looked back to that interview, and reproached himself bitterly that he, so long a clergyman of that parish, had no help to give the only child who ever came to him to ask such help. So, when he lay on his death-bed, he sent for Annie, the only soul, out of all his parish, over which he felt that he had any pastoral cure.

When, with pale, tearful face, she entered his chamber, she found him supported with pillows in his bed. He stretched out his arms to her feebly, but held her close to his bosom, and wept.

"I'm going to die, Annie," he said.

"And go to heaven, sir, to the face o' God," said Annie, not sobbing, but with the tears streaming silently down her face.

"I don't know, Annie. I've been of no use; and I'm afraid God does not care much for me."

"If God loves you half as much as I do, sir, ye'll be well off in heaven. And I'm thinkin' he maun love ye mair nor me. For, ye see, sir, God's love itsel'."

"I don't know, Annie. But if ever I win there, which 'll be more than I deserve, I'll tell him about you, and ask him to give you the help that I couldn't give you."

Love and Death make us all children.—Can Old Age be an evil thing, which does the same?

The old clergyman had thought himself a good protestant at least, but even his protestantism was in danger now. Happily protestantism was nothing to him now. Nothing but God would do now.

Annie had no answer but what lay in her tears. He called his daughter, who stood weeping in the room. She came near.

"Bring my study-bible," he said to her feebly.

She went and brought it—a large quarto bible.

"Here, Annie," said the dying man, "here's my bible that I've made but ower little use o' mysel'. Promise me, if ever ye have a house o' your own, that ye'll read out o' that book every day at worship. I want you not to forget me, as, if all's well, I shall never forget you."

"That *will* I, sir," responded Annie earnestly.

"And ye'll find a new five-pound note between the leaves. Take it, for my sake."

Money! Ah, well! Love can turn gold into grace.

"Yes, sir," answered Annie, feeling this was no time for objecting to anything.

"And good bye, Annie. I can't speak more."

He drew her to him again, and kissed her for the last time. Then he turned his face to the wall, and Annie went home weeping, with the great bible in her arms.

In the inadvertence of grief, she ran into the shop.

"What hae ye gotten there, lassie?" said Bruce, as sharply as if she might have stolen it.

"Mr. Cowie gae me his bible, 'cause he's deein' himsel', and doesna want it ony langer," answered Annie.

"Lat's luik at it."

Annie gave it up with reluctance.

“It’s a braw buik, and bonnie buirds—though gowd an’ purple maitters little to the Bible. We’ll jist lay’t upo’ the room-table, an’ we’ll hae worship oot o’ ’t whan ony body’s wi’ ’s, ye ken.”

“I want it mysel’,” objected Annie, in dismay, for although she did not think of the money at the moment, she had better reasons for not liking to part with the book.

“Ye can hae’t when ye want it. That’s eneuch, surely.”

Annie could hardly think his saying so enough, however, seeing the door of *the room* was kept locked, and Mrs. Bruce, patient woman as she was, would have boxed any one’s ears whom she met coming from within the sacred precincts.

CHAPTER XXI.

BEFORE the next Sunday, Mr. Cowie was dead; and, through some mistake or mismanagement, there was no one to preach. So the congregation did each as seemed right in his own eyes; and Mrs. Forbes went to the missionar kirk in the evening to hear Mr. Turnbull. Kate and Alec accompanied her.

By this time Robert Bruce had become a great man in the community—after his own judgment at least; for although, with a few exceptions, the missionars yielded him the influence he sought, nobody respected him; they only respected his money. He had managed to secure one of the most fashionable pews in the chapel; and now when Mrs. Forbes's party entered, and a little commotion arose in consequence, they being more of gentlefolk than the place was accustomed to entertain, Bruce was the first to walk from his seat, and request them to occupy his pew. Alec

would have passed on, for he disliked the man, but Mrs. Forbes having reasons for being complaisant, accepted his offer. Colds kept the rest of the Bruces at home, and Annie was the only other occupant of the pew. She crept up to the top of it, like a little shy mouse, to be as far out of the way as possible.

“Come oot, Annie,” said Bruce, in a loud whisper.

Annie came out, with a warm flush over her pale face, and Mrs. Forbes entered, then Kate, and last of all, Alec, much against his will. Then Annie re-entered, and Bruce resumed his place as Cerberus of the pew-door. So Annie was seated next to Alec, as she had never been, in church or chapel, or even in school, before, except on that memorable day when they were both *kept in* for the Shorter Catechism. But Annie had no feeling of delight and awe like that with which Alec sat close to his beautiful cousin. She had a feeling of pleasure, no doubt, but the essence of the pleasure was faith. She trusted him and believed in him as much as she had ever done. In the end, those who trust most will find they are nearest the truth. But Annie had no philosophy, either worldly or divine. She had only common sense, gentleness, and faithfulness. She was very glad, though, that Alec had come to hear Mr. Turnbull,

who knew the right way better than anybody else, and could show it quite as well as Evangelist in the *Pilgrim's Progress*.

Nor was she far wrong in her judgment of the height of Mr. Turnbull's star, calculated from the horizon of Glamerton. He was a good man who ventured to think for himself—as far as that may be possible for one upon whose spirit have converged, even before he was born, the influences of a thousand theological ancestors.

After reading the curses on Mount Ebal, he preached an eloquent sermon from the text :

“Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way ; yet saidst thou not ‘there is no hope.’”

He showed his hearers that they had all been seeking satisfaction in their own pursuits, in the pride of their own way ; that they had been disappointed, even to weariness ; and that yet, such was their perversity, they would not acknowledge the hopelessness of the pursuit, and turn to that God who was ready to pardon, and in whose courts a day would give them more delight than a thousand in the tents of wickedness. And opening his peroration by presumptuously appropriating the words of the Saviour, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha, in that day, than for you,” the preacher concluded with a terrible denunciation of wrath

upon the sinners who had been called and would not come. "Woe unto you, for ye would not be warned! Woe unto you, for ye knew your Lord's will, and yet committed things worthy of stripes! Therefore your whip shall be one of scorpions! Woe unto you! I say; for, when the bridegroom cometh, ye shall knock in vain at the closed door; ye shall stand without, and listen for a brief moment to the music and dancing within—listen with longing hearts, till the rush of coming wings overpowers the blissful sounds, and the angels of vengeance sweep upon you, and bearing you afar through waste regions, cast you into outer darkness, where shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, to the endless ages of a divine eternity."

With these words the preacher burst into impassioned prayer for the souls which he saw exposed to a hell of which he himself knew not the horrors, else he dared not have preached it; a hell the smoke of whose torments would arise and choke the elect themselves about the throne of God—the hell of Exhausted Mercy.

As long as the stream of eloquence flowed, the eyes of the congregation were fixed upon the preacher in breathless silence. When it ceased they sank, and a sigh of exhaustion and relief arose. In that ugly building, amidst that weary praying

and inharmonious singing, with that blatant tone, and, worse than all, that merciless doctrine, there was yet *preaching*—that rare speech of a man to his fellow-men whereby in their inmost hearts they know that he in his inmost heart believes. There was hardly an indifferent countenance in all that wide space beneath, in all those far-sloping galleries above. Every conscience hung out the red or pale flag.

When Alec ventured to look up, as he sat down after the prayer, he saw the eyes of Thomas Crann, far away in the crowd, fixed on him. And he felt their force, though not in the way Thomas intended. Thomas never meant to dart *personal* reproaches across the house of God; but Alec's conscience told him nevertheless, stung by that glance, that he had behaved ill to his old friend. Nor did this lessen the general feeling which the sermon had awakened in his mind, un-self-conscious as it was, that something ought to be done; that something was wrong in him somewhere; that it ought to be set right somehow—a feeling which every one in the pew shared, except one. His heart was so moth-eaten and rusty, with the moths and the rust which Mammon brings with him when he comes in to abide with a man, that there was not enough of it left to make the terrible discovery that the rest of it was gone. Its owner

did not know that there was anything amiss with it. What power can empty, sweep, and garnish such a heart? Or what seven devils entering in, can make the last state of that man worse than the first?

A special prayer-meeting having been appointed, to be held after the sermon, Robert Bruce remained, to join in the intercession for the wicked town and its wicked neighbourhood. He even "engaged in prayer," for the first time in public, and astonished some of the older members by his gift in devotion. He had been received into the church only a week or two before, upon profession of faith in the merits of Christ, not in Christ himself—that would not have been definite enough for them. But it would have been all the same to Robert Bruce, for he was ready to believe that he believed anything advantageous.

There had been one or two murmurs against his reception, and he had been several times visited and talked with, before the Church was satisfied as to his conversion. But nothing was known against him beyond the fact that "he luikit at baith sides o' a bawbee;" and having learned many of their idioms, he had succeeded in persuading his examiners, and had possibly persuaded himself at the same time, that he had passed through all the phases of conversion, including conviction, repent-

ance, and final acceptance of offered mercy on the terms proposed, and was now undergoing the slow and troublesome process of sanctification ; in corroboration of which he went on to produce talk, and coppers at the chapel-door. Good people as many of those were who thus admitted him to their communion, in the full belief that none but conscious Christians should enjoy that privilege, his reputation for wealth had yet something to do with it. Probably they thought that if the gospel proved mighty in this new disciple, more of his money might be accessible by and by for good purposes : amongst the rest, for sending missionaries to the heathen, teaching them to divorce their wives and wear trowsers. And now he had been asked to pray, and had prayed with much propriety and considerable unction. To be sure Tibbie Dyster did sniff a good deal during the performance ; but then that was a way she had of relieving her feelings, next best to that of speaking her mind.

When the meeting was over, Robert Bruce, Thomas Crann, and James Johnstone, who was one of the deacons, walked away together. Very little conversation took place between them, for no subject but a religious one was admissible ; and the religious feelings of those who had any were pretty nearly exhausted. Bruce's, however, were not in the least exhausted. On the contrary

he was so pleased to find that he could pray as well as any of them, and the excitement of doing so before judges had been so new and pleasant to him, that he thought he should like to try it again. He thought, too, of the grand bible lying up there on the room-table.

"Come in, sirs," he said, as they approached his door, "and tak' a pairt in our faimily worship; and sae the day'll gang oot wi' prayer, as it cam in wi' prayer. And the Lord'll maybe hae mercy upo' 's, and no destroy the place, shops an' a', for the sins o' the inhaibitants—them 'at sees, for them 'at's blin'."

Neither of his companions felt much inclined to accede to his request: they both yielded notwithstanding. He conducted them up stairs, unlocked the musty room, pulled up the blinds, and admitted enough of lingering light for the concluding devotions of the day. He then proceeded to gather his family together, calling them one by one.

"Mother!" he cried, from the top of the stair, meaning his wife.

"Yes, father," answered Mrs. Bruce.

"Come to worship.—Robert!"

"Ay, father."

"Come to worship.—Johnnie!"

And so he went through the family roll-call, as if it were a part of some strange liturgy. When

all had entered and seated themselves, the head of the house went slowly to the side-table, took from it reverentially the late minister's study-bible, sat down by the window, laid the book on his knees, and solemnly opened it.

Now a five-pound note is not thick enough to make a big bible open between the pages where it is laid; but the note might very well have been laid in at a place where the bible was in the habit of opening. Without an instant's hesitation, Robert slipped it away, and crumpling it up in his hand, gave out the twenty-third psalm, over which it had lain, and read it through. Finding it too short, however, for the respectability of worship, he went on with the twenty-fourth, turning the leaf with thumb and forefinger, while the rest of the fingers clasped the note tight in his palm, and reading as he turned,

"He that hath clean hands and a pure heart——"

As soon as he had finished this psalm, he closed the book with a snap; feeling which to have been improper, he put an additional compensating solemnity into the tone in which he said:

"Thomas Crann, will you engage in prayer?"

"Pray yersel'," answered Thomas gruffly.

Whereupon Robert rose, and, kneeling down, did pray himself.

But Thomas, instead of leaning forward on his chair when he knelt, glanced sharply round at Bruce. He had seen him take something from the bible, and crumple it up in his hand, but would not have felt any inclination to speculate about it, had it not been for the peculiarly keen expression of eager surprise and happy greed which came over his face in the act. Having seen that, and being always more or less suspicious of Bruce, he wanted to know more ; and was thus led into an action of which he would not have believed it possible he should ever be guilty.

He saw Bruce take advantage of the posture of devotion which he had assumed, to put something into his pocket unseen of his guests, as he believed.

When worship was over, Bruce did not ask them to stay to supper. Prayers did not involve expense ; supper did. But Thomas at least could not have stayed longer.

He left his friends and went home pondering. The devotions of the day were not to be concluded for him with any social act of worship. He had many anxious prayers yet to offer, before his heart would be quiet in sleep. Especially there was Alec to be prayed for, and his dawtie, Annie ; and in truth the whole town of Glamerton, and the surrounding parishes—and Scotland, and the world. Indeed

sometimes Thomas went further, and although it is not reported of him that he ever prayed for the devil, as that worthiest of Scotch clergymen prayed, he yet did something very like it once or twice, when he prayed for “the haill universe o’ God, an’ a’ the bein’s in ’t, up and doon, that we ken unco little aboot.”

CHAPTER XXII.

THE next morning Kate and Alec rose early, to walk before breakfast to the top of one of the hills, through a young larch-wood which covered it from head to foot. The morning was cool, and the sun exultant as a good child. The dew-diamonds were flashing everywhere, none the less lovely that they were fresh-made that morning. The lark's song was a cantata with the sun and the wind and the larch-odours, in short, the whole morning for the words. How the larks did sing that morning! The only clouds were long pale delicate streaks of lovely gradations in gray; here mottled, there swept into curves. It was just the morning to rouse a wild longing for motion, for the sea and its shore, for endless travel through an endless region of grace and favour, the sun rising no higher, the dew lingering on every blade, and the lark never wearying for his nest. Kate longed for some infinitude of change without

vicissitude—ceaseless progress towards a goal endlessly removed! She did not know that the door into that life might have been easier to find in that ugly chapel than even here in the vestibule of heaven.

“My nurse used to call the lark ‘Our Lady’s hen,’” said Kate.

“How pretty!” answered Alec, and had no more to say.

“Are the people of Glamerton very wicked, Alec?” asked Kate, making another attempt to rouse a conversation.

“I’m sure I don’t know,” answered Alec. “I suppose they’re no worse than other people.”

“I thought from Mr. Turnbull’s sermon that they must be a great deal worse.”

“Oh! they all preach like that—except good Mr. Cowie, and he’s dead.”

“Do you think he knew better than the rest of them?”

“I don’t know that. But the missionars do know something that other people don’t know. And that Mr. Turnbull always speaks as if he were in earnest.”

“Yes, he does.”

“But there’s that fellow Bruce!”

“Do you mean the man that put us into his seat?”

“Yes. I *can't* think what makes my mother so civil to him.”

“Why shouldn't she be?”

“Well, you see—I can't bear him. And I can't understand my mother. It 's not like her.”

In a moment more they were in a gentle twilight of green, flashed with streaks of gold. A forest of delicate young larches crowded them in, their rich brown cones hanging like the knops that looped up their dark garments fringed with paler green. And the scent! What a thing to *invent*—the smell of a larch wood! It is the essence of the earth-odour, distilled in the thousand-fold alembics of those feathery trees. And the light winds that awoke, blew murmurous music, so sharply and sweetly did that keen foliage divide the air.

Having gazed their fill on the morning around them, they returned to breakfast, and after breakfast they went down to the river. They stood on the bank, over one of the deepest pools, in the bottom of which the pebbles glimmered brown. Kate gazed into it abstracted, fascinated, swinging her neckerchief in her hand. Something fell into the water.

“Oh!” she cried, “what shall I do? It was my mother's.”

The words were scarcely out of her mouth when Alec was in the water. Bubbles rose and broke as he vanished. Kate did not scream, but stood, pale, with parted lips, staring into the pool. With a boiling and heaving of the water, he rose triumphant, holding up the brooch. Kate gave a cry and threw herself on the grass. When Alec reached her, she lay sobbing, and would not lift her head.

"You are very unkind, Alec," she said at last, looking up. "What will your mother say?"

And she hid her face and began to sob afresh.

"It was your mother's brooch," answered Alec.

"Yes, yes; but we could have got it out somehow."

"No other how.—I would have done that for any girl. You don't know what I would do for *you*, Kate."

"You should n't have frightened me. I had been thinking how greedy the pool looked," said Kate, rising now, as if she dared not remain longer beside it.

"I did n't mean to frighten you, Kate. I never thought of it. I am almost a water-rat."

"And now you'll get your death of cold. Come along."

Alec laughed. He was in no hurry to go home.

But she seized his hand and half-dragged him all the way. He had never been so happy in his life.

Kate had cried because he had jumped into the water!

That night they had a walk in the moonlight. It was all moon—the air with the moon-core in it; the trees confused into each other by the sleep of her light; the bits of water, so many moons over again; the flowers, all pale phantoms of flowers: the whole earth, transfused with reflex light, was changed into a moon-ghost of its former self. They were walking in the moon-world.

The silence and the dimness sank into Alec's soul, and it became silent and dim too. The only sound was the noise of the river, quenched in that light to the sleepy hush of moon-haunted streams.

Kate felt that she had more room now. And yet the scope of her vision was less, for the dusk had closed in around her.

She had ampler room because the Material had retired as behind a veil, leaving the Immaterial less burdened, and the imagination more free to work its will. The Spiritual is ever putting on material garments; but in the moonlight, the Material puts on spiritual garments.

Kate sat down at the foot of an old tree which

stood alone in one of the fields. Alec threw himself on the grass, and looked up in her face, which was the spirit-moon shining into his world, and drowning it in dreams.—The Arabs always call their beautiful women *moons*.—Kate sat as silent as the moon in heaven, which rained down silence. And Alec lay gazing at Kate, till silence gave birth to speech :

“Oh Kate ! How I love you !” he said.

Kate started. She was frightened. Her mind had been full of gentle thoughts. Yet she laid her hand on his arm and accepted the love.—But how ?

“You dear boy !” she said.

Perhaps Kate’s answer was the best she could have given. But it stung Alec to the heart, and they went home in a changed silence.—The resolution she came to upon the way, was not so good as her answer.

She did not love Alec so. He could not understand her ; she could not look up to him. But he was only a boy, and therefore would not suffer much. He would forget her as soon as she was out of his sight. So as he was a very dear boy, she would be as kind to him as ever she could, for she was going away soon.

She did not see that Alec would either take what she gave for more than she gave, or else turn from it as no gift at all.

When they reached the house, Alec, recovering himself a little, requested her to sing. She complied at once, and was foolish enough to sing the following

BALLAD.

It is May, and the moon leans down all night
Over a blossomy land.

By her window sits the lady white,
With her chin upon her hand.

“ O sing to me, dear nightingale,
The song of a year ago ;
I have had enough of longing and wail,
Enough of heart-break and woe.

O glimmer on me, my apple-tree,
Like living flakes of snow ;
Let odour and moonlight and melody
In the old rich harmony flow.”

The dull odours stream ; the cold blossoms gleam ;
And the bird will not be glad.
The dead never speak when the living dream—
They are too weak and sad.

She listened and sate, till night grew late,
Bound by a weary spell.
Then a face came in at the garden-gate,
And a wondrous thing befell.

Up rose the joy as well as the love,
In the song, in the scent, in the show !
The moon grew glad in the sky above,
The blossom grew rosy below.

The blossom and moon, the scent and the tune,
In ecstasy rise and fall.
But they had no thanks for the granted boon,
For the lady forgot them all.

There was no light in the room except that of the shining air. Alec sat listening, as if Kate were making and meaning the song. But notwithstanding the enchantment of the night, all rosy in the red glow of Alec's heart; notwithstanding that scent of gilly-flowers and sweet-peas stealing like love through every open door and window; notwithstanding the radiance of her own beauty, Kate was only singing a song. It is sad to have all the love and all the mystery to oneself—the other being the centre of the glory, and yet far beyond its outmost ring, sitting on a music-stool at a common piano old-fashioned and jingling, not in fairyland at all in fact, or even believing in its presence.

But that night the moon was in a very genial humour, and gave her light plentiful and golden. She would even dazzle a little, if one looked at her too hard. She could not dazzle Tibbie though,

who was seated with Annie on the pale green grass, with the moon about them in the air and beneath them in the water.

“Ye say it’s a fine munelicht nicht, Annie.”

“Ay, ’deed is’t. As bonnie a nicht as ever I saw.”

“Weel, it jist passes my comprehension—hoo ye can see, whan the air’s like this. I’ the winter ye canna see, for it’s aye cauld whan the sun’s awa; and though it’s no cauld the nicht, I fin’ that there’s no licht i’ the air—there’s a differ; it’s deid-like. But the soun’ o’ the water’s a’ the same, and the smell o’ some o’ the flowers is bonnier i’ the nicht nor i’ the day. That’s a verra weel. But hoo ye can see whan the sun’s awa, I say again, jist passes my comprehension.”

“It’s the mune, ye ken, Tibbie.”

“Weel, what’s the mune? I dinna fin’ ’t. It mak’s no impress upo’ me.—Ye *canna* see sae weel’s ye say, lass!” exclaimed Tibbie, at length, in a triumph of incredulity and self-assertion.

“Weel, gin ye winna believe me o’ yer ain free will, Tibbie, I maun jist gar ye,” said Annie. And she rose, and running into the cottage, fetched from it a small pocket-bible.

“Noo, ye jist hearken, Tibbie,” she said, as she returned. And, opening the bible, she read one

of Tibbie's favourite chapters, rather slowly no doubt, but with perfect correctness.

"Weel, lassie, I canna mak heid or tail o' 't."

"I'll tell ye, Tibbie, what the mune aye minds me o'. The face o' God's like the sun, as ye hae tellt me; for no man cud see him and live."

"That's no sayin,' ye ken," interposed Tibbie, "that we canna see him efter we're deid."

"But the mune," continued Annie, disregarding Tibbie's interruption, "maun be like the face o' Christ, for it gies licht and ye can luik at it notwithstanding'. The mune's jist like the sun wi' the ower-muckle taen oot o' 't. Or like Moses wi' the veil ower's face, ye ken. The fowk cudna luik at him till he pat the veil on."

"Na, na, lass; that winna do; for ye ken his coontenance was as the sun shineth in his strenth."

"Ay, but that was efter the resurrection, ye ken. I'm thinkin' there had been a kin' o' a veil ower his face a' the time he was upo' the earth; and syne whan he gaed whaur there war only heavenly'een to luik at him, een that could bide it, he took it aff."

"Weel, I wadna wonner. Maybe ye're richt. And gin ye be richt, that accounts for the Transfiguration. He jist lifted the veil aff o' 'm a wee, and the glory aneath it lap oot wi' a leme like the

lichtnin'. But that munelicht! I can mak nae-thing o' 't."

"Weel, Tibbie, I canna mak you oot, ony mair nor ye can the munelicht. Whiles ye appear to ken a' thing about the licht, an' ither whiles ye're clean i' the dark."

"Never ye min' me, lass. I s' be i' the licht some day. Noo we'll gang in to the hoose."

CHAPTER XXIII.

MURDOCH MALISON, the schoolmaster, was appointed to preach in the parish church the following Sunday. He had never preached there, for he had been no favourite with Mr. Cowie. Now, however, that the good man was out of the way, they gave him a chance, and he caught at it, though not without some misgivings. In the school-desk, "he was like a maister or a pope;" but the pulpit—how would he fill that? Two resolutions he came to; the first that he would not read his sermon, but *commit* it and deliver it as like the extempore utterance of which he was incapable as might be—a piece of falsehood entirely understood, and justified by Scotch custom; the second, to take rather more than a hint from the fashion of preaching now so much in favour amongst the seceders and missionaries: he would be a *Jupiter tonans*, wielding the forked lightnings of the law against the sins of Glamerton.

So, on the appointed day, having put on a new suit of black, and the gown over it, he ascended the pulpit stairs, and, conscious of a strange timidity, gave out the psalm. He cast one furtive glance around, as he took his seat for the singing, and saw a number of former as well as present pupils gathered to hear him, amongst whom were the two Truffeys, with their grandfather seated between them. He got through the prayer very well, for he was accustomed to that kind of thing in the school. But when he came to the sermon, he found that to hear boys repeat their lessons and punish them for failure, did not necessarily stimulate the master's own memory.

He gave out his text: The Book of the Prophet Joel, first chapter, fourth verse. Joel, first and fourth. "That which the palmer worm hath left, hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left, hath the canker-worm eaten; and that which the canker-worm hath left, hath the caterpillar eaten."

Now if he could have read his sermon, it would have shown itself a most creditable invention. It had a general introduction upon the temporal punishment of sin; one head entitled, "The completeness of the infliction;" and another, "The punishment of which this is the type;" the

latter showing that those little creeping things were not to be compared to the great creeping thing, namely, the worm that never dies. These two heads had a number of horns called *particulars*; and a tail called an *application*, in which the sins of his hearers were duly chastized, with vague and awful threats of some vengeance not confined to the life to come, but ready to take present form in such a judgment as that described in the text.

But he had resolved not to read his sermon. So he began to repeat it, with sweeps of the hands, pointings of the fingers, and other such tricks of second-rate actors, to aid the self-delusion of his hearers that it was a genuine present outburst from the soul of Murdoch Malison. For they all knew as well as he did, that his sermon was only "cauld kail het again." But some family dishes—Irish stew, for example, or Scotch broth—may be better the second day than the first; and where was the harm? All concerned would have been perfectly content, if he had only gone on as he began. But, as he approached the second head, the fear suddenly flashed through his own that he would not be able to recall it; and that moment all the future of his sermon was a blank. He stammered, stared, did nothing, thought nothing—only felt himself in hell. Roused by the sight of the faces of his hearers growing suddenly expectant at the

very moment when he had nothing more to give them, he gathered his seven fragmentary wits, and as a last resort, to which he had had a vague regard in putting his manuscript in his pocket, resolved to read the remainder. But in order to give the change of mode an appearance of the natural and suitable, he managed with a struggle to bring out the words :

“But, my brethren, let us betake ourselves to the written testimony.”

Every one concluded he was going to quote from Scripture ; but instead of turning over the leaves of the Bible, he plunged his hand into the abysses of his coat. Horror of horrors for the poor autocrat!—the pocket was as empty as his own memory ; in fact it was a mere typical pocket, typical of the brains of its owner. The cold dew of agony broke over him ; he turned deadly pale ; his knees smote one another ; but he made yet, for he was a man of strong will, a final frantic effort to bring his discourse down the inclined plane of a conclusion.

“In fine,” he stammered, “my beloved brethren, if you do not repent and be converted and return to the Lord, you will—you will—you will have a very bad harvest.”

Having uttered this solemn prediction, of the import of which he, like some other prophets,

knew nothing before he uttered it, Murdoch Malison sat down, *a stickit minister*. His brain was a vacuum; and the thought of standing up again to pray was intolerable. No more could he sit there; for if he sat, the people would sit too. Something must be done, and there was nobody to do anything. He must get out and then the people would go home. But how could he escape? He durst not go down that pulpit stair in the sight of the congregation.—He cared no more for his vanished reputation. His only thought was how to get out.

Meantime the congregation was variously affected. Some held down their heads and laughed immoderately. These were mostly of Mr. Malison's scholars, the fine edge of whose nature, if it ever had any, had vanished under the rasp of his tortures. Even Alec, who, with others of the assembly, held down his head from sympathetic shame, could not help remembering how the master had made Annie Anderson stand upon the form, and believing for the time in a general retribution in kind.

Andrew Truffey was crying bitterly. His sobs were heard through the church, and some took them for the sobs of Murdoch Malison, who had shrunk into the pulpit like a snail into its shell, so that not an atom of his form was to be seen except

from the side-galleries. The maiden daughter of the late schoolmaster gave a shriek, and went into a small fit; after which an awful, quite sepulchral silence reigned for a few moments, broken only by those quivering sobs from Truffey, whom his grandfather was feebly and ineffectually shaking.

At length the precentor, George Macwha, who had for some time been turning over the leaves of his psalm-book, came to the rescue. He rose in the lettern and gave out *The hundred and fifty-first psalm*. The congregation could only find a hundred and fifty, and took the last of the psalms for the one meant. But George, either from old spite against the tormentor of boys and girls, or from mere coincidence—he never revealed which—had chosen in reality a part of the *fifty-first psalm*.

“The hunner an’ fifty-first psalm,” repeated George, “from the fifteent verse. An’ syne we’ll gang hame.

My closed lips, O Lord, by thee,
Let them be opened.”

As soon as the singing was over, George left the desk, and the congregation following his example went straggling out of the church, and home, to wait with doubtful patience for the broth which

as yet could taste only of onions and the stone that scoured the pot.

As soon as the sounds of retiring footsteps were heard no more in the great echoing church, uprose, like one of Dante's damned out of a torture-tomb, the form of Murdoch Malison, above the edge of the pulpit. With face livid as that of a corpse, he gave a scared look around, and not seeing little Truffey concealed behind one of the pillars, concluded the place empty, and half crawled, half tumbled down the stair to the vestry, where the sexton was waiting him. It did not restore his lost composure to discover, in searching for his handkerchief, that the encumbrance of the gown had made him put his hand ten times into the same pocket, instead of five times into each, and that in the other his manuscript lay as safe as it had been useless.

But he took his gown off very quietly, put on his coat and forgot the bands, bade the old sexton a gentle *good day*, and stole away home through the streets. He had wanted to get out, and now he wanted to get in; for he felt very much as Lady Godiva would have felt if her hair or her heroism had proved unworthy of confidence.

Poor Murdoch had no mother and no wife: he could not go home and be comforted. Nor was

he a youth, to whom a first failure might be of small consequence. He was five and forty, and his head was sprinkled with grey; he was school-master, and everybody knew him; he had boys under him. As he walked along the deserted streets, he felt that he was running the gauntlet of scorn; but every one who saw him coming along with his head sunk on his bosom, drew back from the window till he had gone by. Returning to the window to look after him, they saw, about twenty yards behind him, a solitary little figure, with the tears running down its face, stumping slowly step for step, and keeping the same distance, after the dejected master.

When Mr. Malison went into the vestry, Truffey had gone into the porch, and there staid till he passed on his way home. Then with stealthily set crutch, putting it down as the wild beast sets down his miching paw, out sprang Truffey and after the master. But however silently Truffey might use his third leg, the master heard the *stump stump* behind him, and felt that he was followed home every foot of the way by the boy whom he had crippled. He felt, too, in some dim degree which yet had practical results, that the boy was taking divine vengeance upon him, heaping on his head the coals of that consuming fire which is love, which is our God. And when the first

shame was over, the thought of Truffey came back with healing on his lonely heart.

When he reached his own door, he darted in and closed it behind, as if to shut out the whole world through which he had passed with that burden of contempt upon his degraded shoulders. He was more ashamed of his failure than he had been sorry for laming Truffey. But the shame would pass; the sorrow would endure.

Meantime two of his congregation, sisters, poor old *mutched wifies*, were going home together. They were distantly related to the schoolmaster, whom they regarded as the honour of the family, as their bond of relation with the world above them in general and with the priesthood in particular. So when Elspeth addressed Meg with reference to the sermon in a manner which showed her determination to acknowledge no failure, Meg took her cue directly.

“Eh! woman; it’s a sair ootluik for puir fowk like us, gin things be gaein that gait!”

“And ’deed it’s that, lass! Gin the hairst be gaein to the moles and the bats, it’s time we war awa hame; for it’ll be a cauld winter.”

“Ay, that it will! The minister was sair owercome at the prospec’, honest man. It was a’ he cud do, to win at the en’ o’ hisst discoorse ohn grutten ootricht.”

“He sees into the will o’ the Almichty. He’s far ben wi’ Him—that’s verra clear.”

“Ay, lass, ay.”

And hence, by slow degrees, in the middle of the vague prophecies of vengeance gathered a more definite kernel of prediction, believed by some, disbelieved, yet feared, by others—that the harvest would be so eaten of worms and blasted with smut, that bread would be up to famine prices, and the poor would die of starvation.

But still the flowers came out and looked men in the face and went in again; and still the sun shone on the evil and on the good, and still the rain fell on the just and on the unjust.

And still the denunciations from the pulpits went on; but the human souls thus exposed to the fires seemed only to harden under their influences.

CHAPTER XXIV.

BEFORE the period of Kate's visit arrived, a letter from Professor Fraser, to the purport that if Mrs. Forbes did not mind keeping Kate a little longer, he would be greatly indebted to her, came to Alec like a reprieve from execution. And the *little longer* lengthened into the late harvest of that country.

The summer shone on, and the corn grew, green and bonnie. And Alec's love grew with the corn; and Kate liked him better and better, but was not a whit more inclined to fall in love with him.

One night, after the house was quiet, Alec, finding he could not sleep, rose and went out to play the ghost a while. It was a sultry night. Great piles of cloud were heaped up in the heavens. The moon gleamed and vanished by fits, looking old and troubled when she sighed herself out of a cloud.

"There's a storm coming," said Alec to him-

self; and watched and waited. There was no wind below. The leaves of the black poplar, so ready to tremble, hung motionless; and not a bat came startling on its unheard skinny wing. But ere long a writhing began in the clouds overhead, and they were twisted and torn about the moon. Then came a blinding flash, and a roar of thunder, followed by a bellowing, as if the air were a great drum, on which Titanic hands were beating and rolling. Then the rain poured down, and the scent of the earth rose into the air. Alec ran to look up at Kate's window. His heart bounded when he saw a white figure looking out into the stormy dark.

"Kate! Kate!" he cried, in a loud whisper, "come out—do come out. It's so splendid!"

She started and drew back. Presently she reappeared, and opening the window, said,

"Alec! do come in."

"No, no. You come out, Kate. You don't know what it's like. You have only to get into bed again."

Kate hesitated. But in a moment more she withdrew. Alec saw she meant to come, and flew round to the door. In a few minutes she glided silently out, and fronted the black sky. The same moment another flash, in which her spirit seemed to her to be universal, flung the dark-

ness aside. She could have counted the houses of Glamerton. The hills rose up within her very soul. The Glamour shone in silver. The harvest gleamed in green. The larch-forest hung like a cloud on the horizon. Then the blank dark folded again its scared wings over the world; and the trees rustled their leaves with one wavy sweep, and were still. And again the rain came down in a tumult—warm genial summer rain, full of the life of lightning. Alec stood staring through the dull dark, as if he would see Kate by the force of his will alone. The tempest in the heavens had awaked a like tempest in his bosom: would the bosom beside him receive his lightning and calm his pent up storm by giving it space to rave? His hand took hers beseechingly. Another flash came, and he saw her face. The whole glory of the night gloomed and flashed and flowed in that face. But alas! its response was to the stormy heaven alone, not to the stormy human soul. As the earth answers the heaven with lightning of her own, so Kate, herself a woman-storm, responded to the elemental cry.

Her shawl had fallen back, and he saw a white arm uplifted, bare to the shoulder, gleaming through the night, and an eye flashing through the flood that filled it. He could not mistake her passion. He knew that it was not for

him; that she was a harp played upon by the elements; yet, passioned still more with her passion, he cried aloud,

“Oh, Kate! if you do not love me, I shall die.”

Kate started, and sought to take her hand from his, but she could not.

“Let me go, Alec,” she said, pleadingly.

His fingers relaxed, and she sped into the house like a bird, leaving him standing in the night.

There was no more lightning. The rain fell heavy and persistent. The wind rose. And when the dawn came, the clouds were drifting over the sky; and the day was a wet gray fringy mass of wind and rain and cloud, tossing trees, and corn hard bested.

He rose and dragged himself away. He had thrown himself upon the grass, and had burned there till his exhausted feelings lay like smouldering fire under the pale ashes of the dawn.

When Kate made her appearance at breakfast she looked bright and cold. She had told his mother about last night, though how much he could only guess. When he asked her whether he might not read to her, she only said,

“If you like.”

Whereupon he did not like.

It was a dreary day. He crept about the house like a child in disgrace, and the darkness seemed an age in coming. When the candles were brought, he went to bed; and when his mother went up, she found him asleep, but feverish. When he woke he was delirious.

For a week there was nothing but wet and windy weather. Alec was in bed. Kate was unhappy. Mrs. Forbes was anxious.

The corn was badly lodged. Patches lay prone, tangled, spiky, and rough; and it was evident that if sunshine, strong healthy sunshine, did not soon break out, the wretched mooncalf-prediction of Murdoch Malison would come true, for the corn, instead of ripening, would start a fresh growth, and the harvest would be a very bad one indeed, whether the people of Glamerton repented or not.

But after a grievous week, that blessed sunshine did come. The corn rose up from its low estate, looked at the sun, gathered heart, and began to ripen diligently.

But Alec was very ill, and did not see Kate for weeks.

Through his wanderings—so strangely does the thousand times o'erwritten palimpsest of the brain befool the mind and even the passions by the redawning of old traces—he talked on about Annie

and their schooldays with Mr. Malison, and never mentioned Kate.

Annie went often to inquire after him, and Mrs. Forbes behaved to her with her old kindness—just a little diluted by anxiety and the possession of Kate.

When Annie thought with herself what she could do for him, she could never think of anything except saying *sangs* to him. But the time for that was long gone by. So, like many other devotions, hers found no outlet but in asking how he was.

At length, one day, he was brought down to the dining-room and laid upon the sofa. Then for the first time since his illness he saw Kate. He looked in her face pitifully and kissed her hand. She put her face down to his. The blood surged up into his cheek, and the light into his eyes, and he murmured :

“That is worth being ill for, Kate. I would be ill again for that.”

She could only say *hush*, and then kiss him again, lest he should be hurt, thinking with a soundless sigh :

“I shall be forced to marry him some day.”

And he was neither her own virgin-born ideal ; nor had his presence the power to beget another and truer ideal in her brain.

From that day he made rapid progress. Kate

would read to him for hours ; and when for love and weakness—an ill-matched pair—he could not look in her face any more, he would yet lie and listen, till her voice filled him with repose, and he slept in music.

CHAPTER XXV.

ON the Monday morning after his terrible failure, Mr. Malison felt almost too ill to go to the school. But he knew that if he gave in he must leave the place. And he had a good deal of that courage which enables a man to front the inevitable, and reap, against his liking, the benefits that spring from every fate steadfastly encountered. So he went, keeping a calm exterior over the shame and mortification that burned and writhed within him. He prayed the morning prayer, falteringly but fluently; called up the bible-class; corrected their blunders with an effort over himself which imparted its sternness to the tone of the correction and made him seem oblivious of his own, though in truth the hardest task he had ever had was to find fault that Monday; in short, did everything as usual, except bring out the *tag*. How could he punish failure who had himself so shamefully failed in the sight of them all? And, to the praise

of Glamerton be it recorded, never had there been a quieter day, one of less defiance of law, than that day of the master's humiliation. In the afternoon, Andrew Truffey laid a splendid bunch of cottage-flowers on his desk, and the next morning it was so crowded with offerings of the same sort that he had quite a screen behind which to conceal his emotion.

{ Wonderful, let me say once more, is the divine revenge! The children would wipe away the humiliation of their tyrant. His desk, the symbol of merciless law, the ark containing no pot of manna, only the rod that never budded, became an altar heaped with offerings, behind which the shamed divinity bowed his head and acknowledged a power greater than that of stripes—overcome by his boys, who hated spelling and figures, hated yet more the Shorter Catechism, could hardly be brought to read the book of Leviticus with decency, and hated to make bricks without straw; and yet, forgetting it all, loved the man beneath whose lashes they had writhed in torture. In his heart the master vowed, with a new love which loosed the millstone of many offences against the little ones, that had for years been hanging about his neck—vowed that, be the shame what it might, he would never leave them, but spend his days in making up for the hardness of his heart and hand; vowed that

he would himself be good, and so make them good; that he would henceforth be their friend, and let them know it. Blessed failure ending in such a victory! Blessed purgatorial pulpit! into which he entered full of self and self-ends; and from which he came down disgusted with that paltry self as well as its deserved defeat. The gates of its evil fortress were now undefended, for Pride had left them open in scorn; and Love, in the form of flower-bearing children, rushed into the citadel. The heart of the master was forced to yield, and the last state of that man was better than the first.

“Swift Summer into the Autumn flowed,” and yet there was no sign of the coming vengeance of heaven. The green corn turned pale at last before the gaze of the sun. The life within had done its best, and now shrunk back to the earth, leaving the isolated life of its children to the ripening of the heavens. Anxious farmers watched their fields and joyfully noted every shade of progress. All day the sun shone strong; and all night the moon leaned down from heaven to see how things were going on, and keep the work gently moving, till the sun should return to take it up again. Before he came, a shadowy frost would just breathe on the earth, which, although there was only death in its chill, yet furthered the goings on of life in repelling the now useless sap, and so helping

the sun to dry the ripening ears. At length the new revelation of ancient life was complete, and the corn stood in living gold, and men began to put in the sickle, because the time of the harvest was come.

And with it came the *hairst-play*, the event of school-life both to master and scholars. But the feelings with which the master watched and longed for it were sadly different from those of the boys. It was delight itself to the latter to think of having nothing to do on those glorious hot days but gather blaeberries, or lie on the grass, or bathe in the Glamour and dry themselves in the sun ten times a day. For the master, he only hoped to get away from the six thousand eyes of Glamerton. Not one allusion had been made in his hearing to his dismal degradation, but he knew that that was only because it was too dreadful to be alluded to. Every time he passed a woman with a baby in her arms at a cottage door, the blind eyes in the back of his head saw her cuddling her child, and the ears that are always hearing what never was said, heard her hope that *he* would never bring such disgrace upon himself and upon her. The tone of additional kindness and consideration with which many addressed him, only made him think of what lay behind, and refuse every invitation given him. But if he were once "in secret shadow far from all

men's sight," his oppressed heart would begin to revive, and he might gather strength enough to face with calmness what he would continue to face somehow, in the performance of his arrears of duty to the boys and girls of Glamerton.

Can one ever bring up arrears of duty? Can one ever make up for wrong done? Will not heaven be an endless repentance?

It would need a book to answer the first two of these questions. To the last of them I answer, "Yes—but a glad repentance."

At length the slow hour arrived. Longing thoughts had almost obliterated the figures upon Time's dial, and made it look a hopeless undivided circle of eternity. But at length twelve o'clock on Saturday came; and the delight would have been almost unendurable to some; had it not been calmed by the dreary proximity of the Sabbath lying between them and freedom. To add to their joy, there was no catechism that day. The prayer, although a little longer than usual, was yet over within a minute after the hour. And almost as soon as the *Amen* was out of the master's mouth, the first boys were shouting jubilantly in the open air. Truffey, who was always the last, was crutching it out after the rest, when he heard the master's voice calling him back. He obeyed it with misgiving—so much had fear become a habit.

"Ask your grandfather, Andrew, if he will allow you to go down to the seaside with me for a fortnight or three weeks," said the master.

"Yes, sir," Truffey meant to say, but the attempt produced in reality an unearthly screech of delight, with which he went off on a series of bounds worthy of a kangaroo, lasting all the way to his grandfather's, and taking him there in half the usual time.

And the master and Truffey did go down to the sea together. The master borrowed a gig and hired a horse and driver; and they sat all three in the space meant for two, and their boxes went by the carrier. To happy Truffey a lame leg or two was not to be compared with the exultant glory of that day. Was he not the master's friend henceforth? And was he not riding in a gig—bliss supreme? And was not the harvest around them, the blue tent of the sun over their heads, and the sea somewhere before them? Truffey was prouder than Mr. Malison could have been if, instead of the result of that disastrous Sunday, he had been judged to surpass Mr. Turnbull in pulpit gifts, as he did in scholastic acquirements. And if there be as much joy in the universe, what matter how it be divided!—whether the master be raised from the desk to the pulpit, or Truffey have a ride in a gig!

About this time, Tibbie, sitting too late one evening upon the grass, caught a bad cold and cough, and was for a fortnight confined to bed. Within two days Annie became her constant companion—that is, from the moment *the play* commenced.

“I tell’t ye I wad hae the licht afore lang,” she said the first time Annie came to her.

“Hoots, Tibbie! It’s only an ill cauld an’ a host,” said Annie, who from being so much with her and Thomas had caught the modes of an elderly woman. “Ye maunna be doonhertit.”

“Doonhertit! The lassie’s haverin’! Wha daured to say that I was doonhertit within sicht o’ the New Jerusalem? Order yer words better, lassie, or else haud yer tongue.”

“I beg yer pardon, Tibbie. It was ill-considered. But ye see hooever willin’ ye may be to gang, we’re nane sae willin’ to lat gang the grip o’ ye.”

“Ye’ll be a hantle better withoot me, lass. Oh, my heid! And the host’s jist like to rive me in bits, as the prophets rave their claes whan the fowk contred them ower sair to bide. Aweel! This body’s nothing but a wheen claes to my sowl; and no verra weel made either, for the holes for my een war forgotten i’ the makin’.—I’m bit jokin’, lassie; for it was the Lord’s han’ that made and

mismade my claes ; and I'm weel willin' to wear them as lang's he likes. Jist mak a drappy o' stoorum to me. Maybe it'll ile my thrapple a bit. I winna be lang ahin Eppie Shawn."

That was the woman who had occupied the other end of the cottage and had died in the spring.

So Annie waited on Tibbie day and night. And that year, for the first time since she came to Glamerton, the harvest began without her. But when Tibbie got a little better, she used to run out now and then to see what progress the reapers were making.

One bright forenoon, Tibbie, feeling better, said to her,

"Noo, bairn, I'm a hantle better the day, and ye maun jist rin oot and play yersel'. Ye're but a bairn, though ye hae the wit o' a wumman. Ye'll be laid up yersel' gin ye dinna get a stammachfu' o' the caller air noo and than. Sae jist rin awa', an' dinna lat me see ye afore denner-time."

At Howglen, there happened, this year, to be a field of oats not far from the house, the reaping of which was to begin that day. It was very warm, and glorious with sunshine. So, after a few stooks had been set up, Alec crawled out with the help of his mother and Kate, and lay down on some sheaves, sheltered from the sun by a stook, and

watched. The men and women and corn leaned all one way. The oats hung their curved heads of little pendulous bells, and gave out a low murmuring sibilation—its only lament that its day was over, and sun and wind no more for it. Through the high stalks gleamed now and then the lowly corn flower, and he watched for the next blue star that would shine out as they cut the golden cloud away. But the sun rose till the stook could shelter him no more. First came a flickering of the shadows of the longest heads athwart his face, and then the sun shone full upon him. His mother and Kate had left him for a while, and, too weak or too lazy to move, he lay with closed eyes, wishing that some one would come to his help. Nor had he to wait long. A sudden shadow came over him. When he looked up to find the source of the grateful relief, he could see nothing but an apron held up in two little hands behind the stook—hiding both the sun and the face of the helper.

“Who’s there?” he asked.

“It’s me—Annie Anderson,” came from behind the unmoving apron.

Now why would not Alec accept this attention from Annie?

“Dinna stan’ there, Annie,” he said. “I dinna want it. My mother will be here in a minute. I see her comin’.”

Annie dropped her arms, and turned away in silence. If Alec could have seen her face, he would have been sorry that he had refused her service. She vanished in a moment, so that Mrs. Forbes and Kate never saw her. They sat down beside him so as to shelter him, and he fell fast asleep. When he woke, he found his head in Kate's lap, and her parasol casting a cool green shadow over him. His mother had gone again. Having made these discoveries, he closed his eyes, and pretending to be still asleep, lay in a waking dream. But dreams themselves must come to an end. Kate soon saw that his face was awake, although his eyes were closed.

"I think it is time we went into the house, Alec," she said. "You have been asleep nearly an hour."

"Happy so long, and not know it?" returned he, looking up at her from where he lay.

Kate blushed a little. I think she began to feel that he was not quite a boy. But he obeyed her like a child, and they went in together.

When Annie vanished among the stooks after the rejection of her offered shadow, a throbbing pain at her heart kept her from returning to the reapers. She wandered away up the field towards a little old cottage, in which some of the farm servants resided. She knew that Thomas Crann was at

work there, and found him busy rough-casting the outside of it.

"Ye're busy harlin', Thomas," said Annie, for the sake of saying something.

"Ay, jist helpin' to mak' a heepocreet," answered Thomas, with a nod and a grim smile, as he threw a trowelful of mortar mixed with small pebbles against the wall.

"What mean ye by that?" rejoined Annie.

"Gin ye kent this auld bothie as weel as I do, ye wadna need to speir that queston. It sud hae been pu'ed doon fra the riggin to the fundation a century afore noo. And here we're pittin a clean face upo' 't, garrin' 't luik as gin it micht stan' anither century, and nobody had a richt to luik asclent at it."

"It *luiks* weel eneuch."

"I tell't ye that I was makin' a heepocreet. There's no a sowl wants this hoose to stan', but the mistress doon there, that doesna want to waur the siller, and the rottans inside the wa's o' 't, that doesna want to fa' into the cluiks o' Bawdrins and Colley—wha lie in wait for sic like jist as the deevil does for the sowl o' the heepocreet.—Come oot o' the sun, lassie. This auld hoose is no a'thegither a heepocreet: it can haud the sun aff o' ye yet."

Thomas had seen Annie holding her hand to her head, an action occasioned partly by the heat

and partly by the rebuff Alec had given her. She stepped into the shadow beside him.

“Isna the warl’ fu’ o’ bonnie things cheap?” Thomas went on. “The sun’s fine and het the day. And syne whan he’s mair nor we can bide, there’s lots o’ shaidows lyin’ about upo’ the face o’ the warl’; though they say there’s some countries whaur they’re scarce, and the shaidow o’ a great rock’s thought something o’ in a weary lan’? But we sudna think less o’ a thing’cause there’s plenty o’ ’t. We hae a heap o’ the gospel, but we dinna think the less o’ ’t for that. Because ye see it’s no whether shaidows be dear or no that we think muckle or little o’ them, but whether we be richt het and tired whan we win till ane o’ them. It’s that ’at maks the differ.”

Sorrow herself will reveal one day that she was only the beneficent shadow of Joy.

Will Evil ever show herself the beneficent shadow of Good?

“Whaur got Robert Bruce that gran’ bible, Annie, do ye ken?” resumed Thomas, after whitening his hypocrite in silence for a few moments.

“That’s my bible, Thomas. Auld Mr. Cowie gae ’t to me whan he was lyin’ near-han’ deith.”

“Hin! hm! ay! ay! And hoo cam’ ’t that ye didna tak’ it and pit it i’ yer ain kist?”

“Maister Bruce tuik it and laid it i’ the room as sune’s I brocht it hame.”

“Did Maister Cowie say onything to ye aboot onything that was in ’t, no?”

“Ay, did he. He spak’ o’ a five-poun’ note that he had pitten in ’t. But whan I luikit for ’t, I cudna fin’ ’t.”

“Ay! ay! Whan did ye luik for ’t?”

“I forgot it for twa or three days—maybe a week.”

“Do ye min’ that Sunday nicht that twa or three o’ ’s cam hame wi’ Bruce, and had worship wi’ him an’ you?”

“Ay, weel eneuch. It was the first time he read oot o’ my bible.”

“Was ’t afore or efter that ’at ye luikit for the nott?”

“It was the neist day; for the sicht o’ the bible pat it i’ my min’. I oughtna to hae thocht aboot it o’ the Sawbath; but it cam’ o’ tsel’; and I didna luik till the Mononday mornin, afore they war up. I reckon Mr. Cowie forgot to pit it in efter a’.”

“Hm! hm! Ay! ay!—Weel, ye see, riches taks to themsels wings and flees awa’; and sae we maunna set oor herts upo’ them, for it’s no mainner o’ use. We get nothing by ’t. The warst bank that a man can lay up his siller in, is his ain

hert. And I'll tell ye hoo that is. Ye ken whan meal's laid up ower lang, it breeds worms, and they eat the meal. But they do little hairm forbye, for they're saft craters, and their teeth canna do muckle ill to the girnel. But there's a kin' o' roost that gathers and a kin' o' moth that breeds i' the gowd and siller whan they're laid up i' the hert; and the roost's an awfu' thing for eatin' awa', and the moth-craters hae teeth as hard's the siller that breeds them; and instead o' eatin' the siller, like the meal-worms, they fa' upo' the girnel itsel' ---that's the heart; and afore lang the hert itsel's roostit awa' wi' the roost, and riddlet through and through wi' the moths, till it's a naisty fushionless thing, o' no use to God or man, not even to mak' muck o'. Sic a crater's hardly worth damnin'."

And Thomas threw trowelful after trowelful of rough-cast upon the wall, making his hypocrite in all the composure of holy thoughts. And Annie forgot her trouble in his presence. For Thomas was one of those whom the prophet foresaw when he said: "And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as a shadow of a great rock in a weary land." I do not mean that Thomas was felt to be such by all whom he encountered; for his ambition was to rouse men from the sleep of sin; to set them face to face with the

terrors of Mount Sinai; to "shak' them ower the mou' o' the pit," till they were all but choked with the fumes of the brimstone. But he was a shelter to Annie—and to Tibbie also, although she and he were too much of a sort to appear to the best advantage in their intercourse.

"Hoo's Tibbie the day?" said Thomas.

"She's a wee bit better the day," answered Annie.

"It's a great preevilege, lassie, and ane that ye'll hae to answer for, to be sae muckle wi' ane o' the Lord's elec' as ye are wi' Tibbie Dyster. She's some thrawn (*twisted*) whiles, but she's a good honest woman, wha has the glory o' God sair at her hert. And she's tellt me my duty and my sins in a mainner worthy o' Debohrah the prophetess; and I aye set mysel' to owercome them as gin they had been the airmy o' Sisera, wham Jael, the wife o' Heber, the Kenite, killed efter a weel-deserved but some cooardly faushion."

Annie did not return to the harvest field that day. She did not want to go near Alec again. So, after lingering a while with Thomas, she wandered slowly across some fields of barley-stubble through which the fresh young clover was already spreading its soft green. She then went over the Glamour by the bridge with the three arches, down the path at the other end, over the single

great stone that crossed the dyer's dam, and so into Tibbie's cottage.

Had Annie been Robert Bruce's own, she would have had to mind the baby, to do part of the housework, and, being a wise child, to attend in the shop during meals, and so expedite the feeding-process which followed the grace. But Robert Bruce was ignorant of how little Annie knew about the investment of her property. He took her freedom of action for the result of the knowledge that she paid her way, whereas Annie followed her own impulse, and never thought about the matter. Indeed, with the reticence of Scotch people, none of her friends had given her ^{much} ~~any~~ information about her little fortune. Had Bruce known this, there would have been no work too constant for her, and no liberty too small.

Thomas did not doubt that Robert Bruce had stolen the note. But he did not see yet what he ought to do about it. The thing would be hard to prove, and the man who would steal would lie. But he bitterly regretted that such a man should have found his way into their communion.

W. A. R. 1851

CHAPTER XXVI.

AT length the corn was gathered in, all over the valley of the two rivers. The wool of the sheep grows again after they are shorn, to keep them warm in the winter: when the dry stubble sticks up short and bristly over the fields, to keep them warm "He scattereth his snows like wool."

The master returned from the sea-coast, bringing Truffey with him, radiant with life. Nothing could lengthen that shrunken limb, but in the other and the crutch together, he had more than the function of two.

And the master was his idol.

And the master was a happier man. The scene of his late failure had begun to fade a little from his brain. The expanse of the church and the waiting people, was no longer a vision certain to arise in the darkness that surrounds sleep. He had been loving and helping; and love and help had turned into a great joy, whose tide washed from

out his heart the bitterness of his remembered sin. When we love truly, all oppression of past sin will be swept away. Love is the final atonement, of which and for which the sacrifice of the atonement was made. And till this atonement is made in every man, sin holds its own, and God is not all in all.

So the earth and all that was therein did the master good. And he came back able to look people in the face—humble still, but no longer humiliated. And when the children gathered once more on a Monday morning, with the sad feeling that the holidays were over, the master's prayer was different from what it used to be, and the work was less irksome than before, and school was not so very hateful after all. Even the Shorter Catechism was not the instrument of torture which it had been wont to be. The cords of the rack were not strained so tight as heretofore.

But the cool bright mornings, and the frosty evenings, with the pale green sky after sundown, spoke to the heart of Alec of a coming loss. Not that Kate had ever shown that she loved him, so that he even felt a restless trouble in her presence which had not been favourable to his recovery. Yet as he lay in the gloaming, and watched those crows flying home, they seemed to be bearing something away with them on their black wings;

and as the light sank and paled on the horizon, and the stars began to condense themselves into sparks amid the sea of green, like those that fleet phosphorescent when the prow of the vessel troubles the summer sea; and then the falling stars of September shot across the darkening sky, he felt that a change was near, that for him winter was coming before its time. And the trees saw from their high watch-tower the white robe of winter already drifting up above the far horizon on the wind that followed his footsteps, and knew what that wind would be when it howled tormenting over those naked fields. So their leaves turned yellow and gray, and the frosty red of age was fixed upon them, and they fell, and lay.

On one of those bright mornings, which make the head feel so clear, the limbs so strong, and the heart so sad, the doom fell in the expected form, that of a letter from the professor. He was at home at last, and wanted his niece to mix his toddy, and scold his servants for him, from both of which enjoyments he said he desired to wean himself in time. Alec's heart sank within him.

"Don't go yet, Kate," he said. But he felt that she must go.

An early day was fixed for her return; and his summer would go with her.

The day before her departure, they were walk-

ing together along one of the rough parish-roads leading to the hills.

"Oh, Kate!" exclaimed Alec, all at once, in an outburst of despair, "what *shall* I do when you are gone? Everything will look so hateful!"

"Oh, Alec!" rejoined Kate, in a tone of expostulation.

"They will all look the same as if you had not gone away!—so heartless, so selfish!"

"But I shall see you in November again."

"Oh, yes. You will see me. But shall I see *you*?—this very *you*? Oh, Kate! Kate! I feel that you will be different then. You will not look at me as you do now. You are kind to me because I have been ill. You pity me for my white face. It is very good of you. But *won't* you love me, Kate? I don't deserve it. But I've read so often of beautiful women loving men who did not deserve it. Perhaps I may be worthy of it some day. And by that time you will have loved somebody else!"

He turned involuntarily, and walked towards home. He recovered himself instantly, however, and returning put his hand on Kate's arm, who was frightened and anxious. Like a child praying to his mother, he repeated:

"*Won't* you love me, Kate?—Just a little?—How can I go into that room after you are gone—

and all your things out of it? I am not good enough ever to sleep there again. *Won't* you love me, Kate? A little?"

"I do love you dearly. You know that, Alec. Why do you always press me to say more?"

"Because I do not like the way you say it."

"You want me to speak your way, not my own, and be a hypocrite?"

"Kate! Kate! I understand you too well."

They walked home in silence.

Now, although this was sad enough for Alec, yet there was room for hope. But she was going away, and he would not know what she was doing or thinking. It was as if she were going to die. Nor was that all;—for—to misuse the quotation—

"For, in that sleep of death, what dreams might come!"

She might dream of some one, love some one—yes, marry some one, and so drive him mad.

When the last night arrived, he followed her up stairs, and knocked at her room door, to see her once again, and make one more appeal. Now an appeal has only to do with justice or pity. With love it is of no use. With love it is as unavailing as wisdom or gold or beauty. But no lover believes this.

There was no answer to the first, the inarticulate appeal. He lost his courage, and dared not knock

again; and while Kate was standing with her head on one side, and her dress half off, wondering if any one had knocked, he crept away to his bed ashamed. There was only a partition of lath and plaster between the two, neither of whom could sleep, but neither of whom could have given the other any comfort. Not even another thunder-storm could have brought them together again that night.

At length the pitiless dawn, which *will* come, awoke Alec, and he saw the last few aged stars wither away as the great young star came up the hill, the despot who, crowned with day, drives men up and abroad, be the weather, inside or out, what it may. It was the dreariest dawn Alec had ever known.

Kate appeared at breakfast with indescribable signs of preparation about her. The breakfast was dull and cheerless. The autumn sun was brilliant. The inevitable gig appeared at the door. Alec was not even to drive it. He could only help her into it, kiss her gloved hand on the rail, and see her vanish behind the shrubbery.

He then turned in stern endurance, rushed up into the very room he had thought it impossible ever to enter again, caught up a handkerchief she had left behind her, pressed it to his face, threw himself on her bed, and—well, he fell fast asleep.

He woke not so miserable as he had expected. Of this he was so much ashamed that he tried hard to make himself more miserable, by going over all the miseries in store for him. But his thoughts would not obey him. They would take their own way, fly where they pleased, and alight where they would. And the meeting in November was the most attractive object in sight.—So easily is Hope born, when the time of her birth is come!

But he soon found that Grief is like some maidens: she will not come when she is called; but if you leave her alone, she will come of herself. Before the day was over he had sacrificed griefs enough upon the altar of Love. All at once the whole vacant region rushed in upon him with a ghostly sense of emptiness and desolation. He wandered about the dreary house like a phantom about a cenotaph. The flowers having nothing to say, because they had ceased to mean anything, looked ashamed of themselves. The sunshine was hastening to have done with it, and let the winter come as soon as he liked, for there was no more use in shining like this. And Alec being in love could feel all this, although he had not much imagination. For the poetic element has its share in the most common pug-faced man in creation; and when he is in love, what of that sort there is in him, as well as what there is of any sort of

good thing, will come to the surface, as the trout do in the balmy summer evenings. Therefore let every gentle maiden be warned how she takes such a manifestation of what is in the man for the man himself. It is the deepest, it is the best in him, but it may not be in the least his own yet. It is one thing to have a mine of gold in one's ground, know it, and work it; and another to have the mine still but regard the story as a fable, throw the aureal hints that find their way to the surface as playthings to the woman who herself is but a plaything in the owner's eyes, and mock her when she takes them for precious. In a word, every man in love shows better than he is, though, thank God, not better than he is meant to become.

After Kate's departure, Alec's health improved much more rapidly. Hope, supplied by his own heart, was the sunlight in which he revived. He had one advantage over some lovers—that he was no metaphysician. He did not torture himself with vain attempts to hold his brain as a mirror to his heart, that he might read his heart there. The heart is deaf and dumb and blind, but it has more in it—more life and blessedness, more torture and death—than any poor knowledge-machine of a brain can understand, or even delude itself into the fancy of understanding.

From the first, Kate's presence had not been favourable to his recovery, irrespectively of the excitement and restlessness which it occasioned ; for she was an absorbent rather than a diffuser of life. Her own unsatisfied nature, her excitable-ness, her openness to all influences from the external world, and her incapacity for supplying her needs in any approximate degree from inward resources ; her consequent changeableness, moodiness, and dependency—were all unfavourable influences upon an invalid who loved her.

The first thing he did was to superintend the painting and laying up of his boat for the winter. It was placed across the rafters of the barn, wrapt in tarpaulin.

The light grew shorter and shorter. A few rough rainy days stripped the trees of their foliage ; and although the sun shone out again and made lovely weather,

Saint Martin's summer, halcyon days,
it was plain to all the senses that the autumn was drawing to a close.

CHAPTER XXVII.

ALL the prophetic rumours of a bad harvest had proved themselves false. Never a better harvest had been gathered in the strath, nor had one ever been carried home in superior condition. But the passion for prophecy had not abated in Glamerton. It was a spiritual epidemic over the whole district.

Now a certain wily pedler had turned the matter over and resolved to make something of it.

One day there appeared in the streets of Glamerton a man carrying in his hand a bundle of papers as a sample of what he had in the pack upon his shoulders. He bore a burden of wrath. They were all hymns and ballads of a minacious description, now one and now another of which he kept repeating in lugubrious recitative. Amongst them some of Watts's, quite unknown to Glamerton worshippers, carried the palm of horror. But there were others which equalled them in ab-

surdity, although their most ludicrous portions affected the populace only as a powerful realization of the vague and awful. One of these had the following stanzas:

“The dragon’s tail shall be the whip
Of scorpions foretold,
With which to lash them thigh and hip
That wander from the fold.
And when their wool is burnt away—
Their garments gay, I mean—
Then this same whip they ’ll feel, I say,
Upon their naked skin.”

The probability seems to be that, besides collecting from all sources known to him, the pedler had hired an able artist for the production of original poems of commination. His scheme succeeded; for great was the sale of these hymns and ballads at a halfpenny a piece in the streets of Glamerton. Even those who bought to laugh, could not help feeling an occasional anticipatory sting of which, being sermon-seared, they were never conscious under pulpit denunciation.

The pedler having emptied his wallet—not like that of Chaucer’s Pardoner,

“Bretful of pardon brought from Rome all hot,”

but crammed with damnation brought all hot from a different place—vanished; and another wonder

appeared in the streets of Glamerton—a man who cried with a loud voice, borrowing the cry of the ill-tempered prophet: “Yet forty days, and Glamerton shall be destroyed.”

This cry he repeated at awful intervals of about a minute, walking slowly through every street, lane, and close of the town. The children followed him in staring silence; the women gazed from their doors in awe as he passed. The insanity which gleamed in his eyes, and his pale long-drawn countenance, heightened the effect of the terrible prediction. His belief took theirs by storm.

The men smiled to each other, but could not keep it up in the presence of their wives and sisters. They said truly that he was only a madman. But as prophets have always been taken for madmen, so madmen often pass for prophets; and even Stump-in’ Steenie, the town-constable, had too much respect either to his prophetic claims, or his lunacy, perhaps both, to take him into custody. So through the streets of Glamerton he went on his bare feet, with tattered garments, proclaiming aloud the coming destruction. He walked in the middle of the street, and turned aside for nothing. The coachman of the Royal Mail had to pull up his four greys on their haunches to keep them off the defiant prophet, and leave him to pursue the straight line of his mission. The ministers warned

the people on the following Sunday against false prophets, but did not say that man was a false prophet, while with their own denunciations they went on all the same. The chief effects of it all were excitement and fear. There was little sign of repentance. But the spiritual physicians did not therefore doubt their exhibition. They only increased the dose. The prophet appeared one day. He had vanished the next.

But within a few days, a still more awful prediction rose, cloud-like, on the spiritual sky. A placard was found affixed to the doors of every place of worship in the town, setting forth in large letters that, according to certain irrefragable calculations from "the number of a man" and other such of the more definite utterances of Daniel and St. John, the day of judgment must without fail fall upon the next Sunday week. Whence this announcement came, no one knew. But the truth is, every one was willing it should remain shrouded in the mystery congenial to such things. On the door of the parish-church, it found an especially suitable place; for that, not having been painted for many years, still retained the mourning into which it had been put on occasion of the death of the great man of the neighbourhood, the owner of all Glamerton, and miles around it—this mourning consisting of a ground of dingy black, over

which at small regular distances had been painted a multitude of white spots with tails, rather more like commas than tadpoles, intended to represent the falling tears of lamenting tenants and humble servants generally. Curly's grandfather had been the artist of the occasion. In the middle of this door stood the awful prophecy, surrounded on every side by the fall of the faded tears; and for anything anybody knew, it might have been a supernatural exudation from the damp old church, full of decay for many a dreary winter. Dreadful places, those churches, hollow and echoing all the week! I wonder if the souls of idle parsons are condemned to haunt them, and that is what gives them that musty odour and that exhausting air.

Glamerton was variously affected by this condensation of the vapour of prophecy into a definite prediction.

"What think ye o' 't, Thomas Crann?" said Andrew Constable. "The calcleation seems to be a' correck. Yet somehoo I canna believe in 't."

"Dinna fash yer heid aboot it, Anerew. There's a heap o' judgments atween this an' the hinner en'. The Lord'll come whan naebody's luikin' for him. And sae we maun be aye ready. Ilka year's an anno dominy. But I dinna think the man that made that calcleation as ye ca' 't's jist

a'thegeether infallible. An' for ae thing, he 's forgotten to mak' allooance for the laip years."

"The day 's by, than!" exclaimed Andrew, in a tone contrasting pretty strongly with his previous expression of unbelief.

"Or else it 's nae comin' sae sune as the prophet thocht. I'm no clear at this moment aboot that. But it 's a sma' maitter that."

Andrew's face fell, and he looked thoughtful.

"Hoo mak' ye that oot?" said he.

"Hoots man!" answered Thomas; "dinna ye see 'at gin the man was cawpable o' makin' sic a mistak 's that, i' the mids o' his perfec confidence in his ain knowledge an' jeedgment, he cud hardly hae been intendit by Providence for an interpreter o' dark sayings of old?"

Andrew burst into a laugh.

"Wha cud hae thocht, Thomas, 'at ye cud hae pickit sic gumption oot o' stanes!"

And so they parted, Andrew laughing, and Thomas with a curious smile.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

TOWARDS the middle of the following week the sky grew gloomy, and a thick small incessant rain brought the dreariest weather in the world. There was no wind, and miles of mist were gathered in the air. After a day or two the heavens grew lighter, but the rain fell as steadily as before, and in heavier drops. Still there was little rise in either the Glamour or the Wan Water, and the weather could not be said to be anything but seasonable.

On the Saturday afternoon, weary of some poor attempts at Greek and Latin, weary of the wretched rain, and weary with wishing to be with Kate, Alec could stay in the house no longer, and went out for a walk. Along the bank of the river he wandered, through the rain above and the wet grass below, to the high road, stood for a moment on the bridge gazing at the muddy Glamour, which came down bank-full,—Annie

saw him from Tibbie's window as he stood—and then turned and followed its course below the bridge through a wild, and now dismal country, to where the waters met. It was getting dusk when he reached the place. With what a roar the Wan Water came down its rocks, rushing from its steeper course into the slow incline of the Glamour! A terrible country they came from—those two ocean-bound rivers—up among the hill-tops. There on the desolate peat-mosses, spongy, black, and cold, the rain was pouring into the awful holes whence generations had dug their fuel, and into the natural chasms of the earth, soaking the soil, and sending torrents, like the flaxen hair of a Titanic Naiad, rolling into the bosom of the rising river-god below. The mist hung there, darkening everything with its whiteness, ever sinking in slow fall upon the slippery peat and the heather and the gray old-stones. By and by the pools would be filled, and the hidden caves; their sides would give way; the waters would rush from the one into the other, and from all down the hill-sides, and the earth-sponge would be drained off.

“Gin this hauds, we ’ll hae a spate,” said Alec to himself, when he saw how the waters met, flooding the *invers*, and beginning to invade the trees upon the steep banks below. The scene was

in harmony with his feelings. The delight of the sweeping waters entered his soul, and filled him with joy and strength. As he took his way back through the stunted trees, each swathed in its own mist, and dripping as if it were a separate rain-cloud; and through the bushes that wetted him like pools; and through the streams that poured down the steep bank into the Glamour; he thought how different it was when he walked there with Kate, when the sun was bright, and the trees were covered with green, and the heather was in patches of blossom, and the river went clear-hearted and singing over its stony channel below. But he would rather have it thus, now that Kate was gone.

The floods then were slower in rising, and rose to a much greater height than now. In the present day, the numerous drains provide a rapid and steady escape, so that there is no accumulation of waters, and no bursting of the walls of natural or accidental reservoirs. And I presume that from slow changes produced in the climate by cultivation, there may be a less fall of water now than there used to be; for in some parts of that country the rivers have, within the memory of middle-aged men, considerably decreased in volume.

That evening, in the schoolmaster's lodgings, Truffey sat at the tea-table triumphant. The

master had been so pleased with an exercise which he had written for him—written in verse too—that he had taken the boy home to tea with him, dried him well at his fire, and given him as much buttered toast as he could eat. Truffey had often had a like privilege, but never for an ovation, as now. How he loved the master!

“Truffey,” said Mr. Malison, after a long pause, during which he had been staring into the fire, “how’s your leg?”

“Quite weel, thank ye, sir,” answered Truffey, unconsciously putting out the foot of the wrong leg on the fender. “There wasna onything the maitter wi’ ’t.”

“I mean the other leg, Truffey—the one that I—that I—hurt.”

“Perfetly weel, sir. It’s no worth speirin’ efter. I wonner that ye tak sic pains wi’ me, sir, whan I was sic a nickum.”

The master could not reply. But he was more grateful for Truffey’s generous forgiveness than he would have been for the richest living in Scotland. (Such forgiveness is just giving us back ourselves—) clean and happy. And for what gift can we be more grateful? He vowed over again to do all he could for Truffey. Perhaps a sticket minister might have a hand in making a minister that would not stick.

Then the master read Truffey's queer composition aloud, and notwithstanding all his conscientious criticism, Truffey was delighted with his own work when removed to an objective distance by the master's reading. At length Mr. Malison said :

"It's time to go home, Andrew Truffey. Put on my cloak—there. And keep out of the puddles as much as you can."

"I'll pit the sma' fit in," said Truffey, holding up the end of his crutch, as he stretched it forward to make one bound out of the door. For he delighted in showing off his agility to the master.

CHAPTER XXIX.

WHEN Alec looked out of his window the next morning, he saw a broad yellow expanse below. The Glamour was rolling, a mighty river, through the land. A wild waste foamy water, looking cold and torn and troubled, it swept along the fields where late the corn had bowed to the autumn winds. But he had often seen it as high. And all the corn was safe in the yard.

Neither he nor his mother regretted much that they could not go to church. Mrs. Forbes sat by the fire and read Hannah More's *Christian Morals*, and Alec sat by the window reading James Montgomery's *World before the Flood*, and watching the river, and the splashing of the rain in the pluvial lake, for the water was nearly a foot deep around the house, although it stood upon a knoll of gravel.

All night Tibbie Dyster had lain awake in her lonely cottage, listening to the quiet heavy go of

the water from which all the sweet babbling sounds and delicate music-tones had departed. The articulation of the river-god was choked in the weight and hurry of its course to the expectant sea. Tibbie was still far from well, had had many relapses, and was more than ever convinced that the Lord was going to let her see his face.

Annie would have staid with her that Saturday night, as she not unfrequently did, had she not known that Mrs. Bruce would make it a pretext for giving her no change of linen for another week.

The moment Bruce entered the chapel—for no weather deprived him of his Sabbath privileges—Annie, who had been his companion so far, darted off to see Tibbie. When Bruce found that she had not followed him, he hurried to the door, but only to see her halfway down the street. He returned in anger to his pew, which he was ashamed of showing thus empty to the eyes of his brethren. But there were many pews in like condition that morning.

The rain having moderated a little in the afternoon, the chapel was crowded in the evening. Mrs. Bruce was the only one of the Bruce-family absent. The faces of the congregation wore an expectant look, for they knew Mr. Turnbull would *improve the occasion*: he always sought col-

lateral aid to the influences of the truth, and sometimes attempted to suborn Nature herself to give effect to his persuasions. The text he had chosen was: "But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be." He made no allusion to the paper which the rain was busy washing off the door of the chapel; nor did he wish to remind the people that this was the very day foreseen by the bill-sticking prophet, as appointed for the advent of judgment. But when, in the middle of the sermon, a flash of lightning seemed to extinguish the array of candles, and was followed by an instant explosion of thunder, and a burst of rain, as if a waterspout had broken over their heads, coming down on the roof like the trampling of horses and the noise of chariot-wheels, the general start and pallor of the congregation showed that they had not forgotten the prediction. This then was the way in which judgment was going to be executed: a second flood was about to sweep them from the earth. So, although all stared at the minister as if they drank in every word of his representation of Noah's flood, with its despairing cries, floating carcasses, and lingering deaths on the mountain tops as the water crept slowly up from peak to peak, yet they were much too frightened at the little flood in the valley of two rivers, to care for the terrors of the great deluge of

the world, in which, according to Mr. Turnbull, eighty thousand millions of the sons and daughters of men perished, or to heed the practical application which he made of his subject. For once the contingent of nature was too powerful for the ends of the preacher.

When the service was over, they rushed out of the chapel.

Robert Bruce was the first to step from the threshold up to the ankles in water. The rain was falling—not in drops, but in little streams.

"The Lord preserve's!" he exclaimed. "It's risen a fit (*foot*) upo' Glamerton a'ready. And there's that sugar i' the cellar! Bairns, rin hame yer lanes. I canna bide for ye."

And he was starting off at the top of his speed.

"Hoots! man," cried Thomas Craun, who came behind him, "ye're sae sair ta'en up wi' the warl, 'at ye hae nae room for ordinar' common sense. Ye're only stannin' up to the mou's o' yer shune i' the hole 'at ye unnertook yersel' to fill up wi' the lime 'at was ower efter ye had turned yer dry stane dyke intil a byre-wa'."

Robert stepped out of the hole and held his tongue. At that moment, Annie was slipping past him to run back to Tibbie. He made a pounce upon her and grabbed her by the shoulder.

"Nae mair o' this, Annie!" he said. "Come

hame for cowmon dacency, and dinna gang strava-guin' in a nicht like this, naebody kens whaur."

"A' body kens whaur," returned Annie. "I'm only gaun to sleep wi' Tibbie Dyster, puir blin' body!"

"Lat the blin' sleep wi' the blin', an' come ye hame wi' me," said Robert oracularly, abusing several texts of Scripture in a breath, and pulling Annie away with him. "Ye'll be drooned afore the mornin' in some hole or ither, ye fashous rintheroot! And syne wha'll hae the wyte o' 't?"

Heartily vexed and disappointed, Annie made no resistance, for she felt it would be uncomely. And how the rain did pour as they went home! They were all wet to the skin in a moment except Mr. Bruce, who had a big umbrella, and reasoned with himself that his Sabbath clothes were more expensive than those of the children.

The best way certainly was to send the wet ones to bed as soon as they got home. But how could Annie go to bed when Tibbie was lying awake listening for her footsteps, and hearing only the sounds of the rising water? She made up her mind what to do. Instead of going into her room, she kept listening on the landing for the cessation of footsteps. The rain poured down on the roof with such a noise, and rushed so fiercely along the spouts, that she found it difficult to be sure.

There was no use in changing her clothes only to get them wet again, and it was well for her that the evening was warm. But at length she was satisfied that her gaolers were at supper, whereupon she stole out of the house as quietly as a kitten, and was out of sight of it as quickly. Not a creature was to be seen. The gutters were all choked and the streets had become river-beds, already torn with the rush of the ephemeral torrents. But through it all she dashed fearlessly, bounding on to Tibbie's cottage.

"Eh, preserve's! sic a nicht, Peter Whaup!" said Peter's wife to Peter as he sat by the fire with his cutty in his teeth. "It'll be an awfu' spate."

"Ay will't," rejoined Peter. "There's mair water nor whusky already. Jist rax doon the bottle, gudewife. It tak's a hantle to quawliffee sic weet's this. Tak' a drappy yersel', 'oman, to haud it oot."

"Ye hae had plenty, Peter. *I* dinna want nane. Ye're a true smith, man: ye hae aye a spark i' yer throat."

"Toots! There never was sic a storm o' water sin' the ark o' the covenant——"

"Ye mean Noah's ark, Peter, man."

"Weel, weel! onything ye like. It's a' the same, ye ken. I was only jist remarkin' that we

haena sic a fa' o' rain ilka day, an' we sud jist haud the day in min', pay 't respec' like, keep it wi' a tumbler, ye ken—cummummerate it, as they ca' 't. Rax doon the bottle, lass, and I'll jist gie a luik oot an' see whether the water's likely to come in ower the door-sill; for gin it ance crosses the thrashol', I doot there wonno be whusky eneuch i' the hoose, and bein' the Sawbath nicht, we canna weel win at ony mair."

Thus entreated, Mistress Whaup got the bottle down. She knew her husband must have whisky, and, like a wise woman, got him to take as large a proportion of the immitigable quantity as possible at home. Peter went to the door to reconnoitre.

"Guid guide 's!" he cried; "there 's a lassie run by like a maukin (*hare*), wi' a splash at ilka fit like a wauk-mill. An' I do believe it was Annie Anderson. Will she be rinnin' for the howdie (*midwife*) to Mistress Bruce? The cratur'll be droont. I'll jist rin efter her."

"An' be droont yersel, Peter Whaup! She's a wise lass, an' can tak care o' hersel. Lat ye her rin."

But Peter hesitated.

"The water's bilin'," cried Mrs. Whaup.

And Peter hesitated no longer.

Nor indeed could he have overtaken Annie if he had tried. Before Peter's tumbler was

mixed she was standing on the stone across the dyer's *dam*, looking down into the water which had risen far up the perpendicular sides of its rocky conduit. Across the stone the water from the street above was pouring into the Glamour.

"Tibbie," she said as she entered the cottage, "I doobt there's gaun to be a terrible spate."

"Lat it come," cried Tibbie. "The bit hoosie's fund't upon a rock, and the rainus may fa', and the wins may blaw, and the floods may ca at the hoosie, but it winna fa', it canna fa', for it's fund't upo' a rock."

Perhaps Tibbie's mind was wandering a little, for when Annie entered, she found her face flushed, and her hands moving restlessly. But what with this assurance of her confidence, and the pleasure of being with her again, Annie thought no more about the waters of the Glamour.

"What keepit ye sae lang, lassie?" said Tibbie wearily after a moment's silence, during which Annie had been redispousing the peats to get some light from the fire.

She told her the whole story.

"And hae ye had nae supper?"

"Na. But I dinna want ony."

"Pit aff yer weet claes than, and come to yer bed."

Annie crept into the bed beside her—not

dry even then, for she was forced to retain her last garment. Tibbie was restless, and kept moaning, so that neither of them could sleep. And the water kept sweeping on faster, and rising higher up the rocky mound on which the cottage stood. The old woman and the young girl lay within and listened fearless.

CHAPTER XXX.

ALEC too lay awake and listened to the untiring rain. Weary of the house, he had made use of the missionar kirk to get out of it, and had been one of Mr. Turnbull's congregation that night. Partly because his mind was unoccupied by any fear from without, for he only laughed at the prophecy, something in that sermon touched him deeper than any one else in the place perhaps, awoke some old feelings of responsibility that had been slumbering for a long time, and made him reflect upon an unquestioned article of his creed—the eternal loss and misery and torture of the soul that did not repent and believe. At the same time, what repentance and belief really meant—what he had to do first—he did not know. All he seemed to know was that he was at that moment in imminent danger of eternal damnation. And he lay thinking about this while the rain kept pouring upon the roof out of the thick night over-

head, and the Glamour kept sweeping by through the darkness to the sea. He grew troubled, and when at last he fell asleep, he dreamed frightfully.

When he woke, it was a dull morning, full of mist and rain. His dreams had fled even from his memory, but had left a sense of grievous discomfort. He rose and looked out of the window. The Glamour spread out and rushed on like the torrent of a sea forsaking its old bed. Down its course swept many dark objects, which he was too far off to distinguish. He dressed himself, and went down to its edge—not its bank: that lay far within and far beneath its torrent. The water, outspread where it ought not to be, seemed to separate him from the opposite country by an impassable gulf of space, a visible infinitude—a vague marvel of waters. Past him swept trees torn up by the roots. Down below, where he could not see, stones were rolling along the channel. On the surface, sheaves and trees went floating by. Then a cart with a drowned horse between the shafts, heaved past in the central roll of the water. Next came something he could not understand at first. It was a great water-wheel. This made him think of the mill, and he hurried off to see what the miller was doing.

Truffey went stumping through the rain and the streams to the morning school. Gladly would

he have waited on the bridge, which he had to cross on his way, to look at the water instead. But the master would be there, and Truffey would not be absent. When Mr. Malison came, Truffey was standing in the rain waiting for him. Not another boy was there. He sent him home. And Truffey went back to the bridge over the Glamour, and there stood watching the awful river.

Mr. Malison sped away westward towards the Wan Water. On his way he found many groups of the inhabitants going in the same direction. The bed of the Wan Water was here considerably higher than that of the Glamour, although by a rapid descent it reached the same level a couple of miles below the town. But its waters had never, to the knowledge of any of the inhabitants, risen so high as to surmount the ridge on the other slope of which the town was built. Consequently they had never invaded the streets. But now people said the Wan Water would be down upon them in the course of an hour or two, when Glamerton would be in the heart of a torrent, for the two rivers would be one. So instead of going to school, all the boys had gone to look, and the master followed them. Nor was the fear without foundation; for the stream was still rising, and a foot more would overtop the ground between it and the Glamour.

But while the excited crowd of his townsmen stood in the middle of a stubble-field, watching the progress of the enemy at their feet, Robert Bruce was busy in his cellar preparing for its reception. He could not move his cask of sugar without help, and there was none of that to be had. Therefore he was now, in his shirt-sleeves, carrying the sugar up the cellar-stairs in the coal-scuttle, while Mrs. Bruce, in a condition very unfit for such efforts, went toiling behind him with the *meal-bossie* filled far beyond the brim. As soon as he had finished his task, he hurried off to join the watchers of the water:

James Johnstone's workshop was not far from the Glamour. When he went into it that morning, he found the treadles under water, and thought he had better give himself *the play*.

'I'll jist tak a daun'er (*stroll*) doon to the brig to see the spate gang by," he said to himself, and, putting on his grandfather's hat, went out into the rain.

As he came near the bridge, he saw cripple Truffey leaning over the parapet with horror-stricken looks. The next moment he bounded to his one foot and his crutch, and *spanged* over the bridge as if he had been gifted with six legs.

When James reached the parapet, he could see nothing to account for the terror and eagerness in

Truffey's pale face, nor for his precipitate flight. But being short-sighted and inquisitive, he set off after Truffey as fast as the dignity proper to an elderly weaver and a deacon of the missionaries, would permit.

As Alec came near the mill he saw two men standing together on the verge of the brown torrent which separated them from it. They were the miller—the same whose millstone Curly had broken by shutting down the sluice—and Thomas Crann, the latest architect employed about the building. Thomas had been up all night, wandering hither and thither along the shore of the Wan Water, sorely troubled about Glamerton and its careless people. Towards morning he had found himself in the town again, and, crossing the Glamour, had wandered up the side of the water, and so come upon the sleepless miller contemplating his mill in the embrace of the torrent.

"Ye maun alloo it's *hard*, Thamas," said the miller.

"*Hard?*" retorted Thomas with indignation. "Hoo daur ye say sic a thing! Here hae ye been stickin' yer bit water wheel i' the mids o' ane o' the Lord's burns, and the Lord has ca'd it roon and roon for you and yer forbears aboon a hunner year, and ye've grun' yer breid oot o' 't, and the breid o' yer hairns, and noo whan it's i' the Lord's

gait, and he maun hae mair room to sen' doon the waters frae his hills, ye grummle an' compleen at the spate that's been foreordeen't frae the verra black mirk o' eternity. What wad ye think o' a bairn gaein' compleenin' o' you 'cause your back-water had ta'en awa' his wheelie o' rashes, whaur it was whurlin' bonnie afore ye liftit the sluice?"

Thomas's zeal had exposed him to the discomfiture of those who, if they do not actually tell lies for God, yet use very bad arguments for him. The miller rejoined :

"You or me, Thomas, wad see bairnie an' wheelie alike safe, afore we liftit the sluice. The Lord *nicht* hae managed ohn ta'en awa' my mull."

"Yer mull's nae doon the water, yet, Simon. It's in some extremity, I confess; but whether it's to be life or deith, none kens but ane. Gang hame, man, and gang doon upo' yer knees, and pray."

"Pray to God aboot an auld meal-mull?" said Simon with indignation. "'Deed, I winna be sae ill-bred."

And so saying, he turned and went home, leaving Thomas muttering—

"Gin a body wad pray aboot onything, they nicht, maybe, tak' a likin' till 't. A prayer may

do a body guid whan it's no jist o' the kin' to be a'thegither acceptable to the min' o' the Almichty. But I doobt his ear's gleg for ony prayer that gangs up his gait."

The last two sentences were spoken aloud as he shook hands with Alec, of whose presence he had been aware from the first, although he had taken no notice of his arrival.

Before another word was uttered, their attention was attracted by a large mass floating down the river.

"What's that, Thomas?" said Alec. "I houp it winna tak' awa' the brig."

He meant the wooden bridge a few hundred yards below them, which, inaccessible from either side, was now very little above the level of the water.

"It's jist the riggin' o' some cottar's bit hoosie," answered Thomas. "What's come o' them that was aneath it, the Lord only kens. The water's jist liftit the roof bodily. There it gangs—throu' aneath the brig.—The brig's doon. It's no doon.—It's stan'in' yet.—But the puir fowk, Alec!—Eh, gin they warnna preparet! Think o' that, Alec."

"I houp they wan oot," answered Alec.

"Houps are feckless things, Alec," returned Thomas, censoriously.

But the talk was turned into another channel by the appearance—a few ridges off—for they were standing in a field—of Truffey, who, with frantic efforts to get on, made but little speed, so deep did his crutch sink in the soaked earth. He had to pull it out at every step, and seemed mad in his foiled anxiety to reach them. He tried to shout, but nothing was heard beyond a crow like that of a hoarse chicken. Alec started off to meet him, but just as he reached him his crutch broke in the earth, and he fell and lay unable to speak a word. With slow and ponderous arrival, Thomas Crann came up.

“Annie Anderson!” panted out Truffey at length.

“What about *her*?” said both in alarm.

“Tibbie Dyster!” sobbed Truffey in reply.

“Here’s Jeames Johnstone!” said Thomas; “he’ll tell’s a’ about it.”

He surmised the facts, but waited in painful expectation of assurance from the deacon, who came slipping and sliding along the wet ridges.

“What’s this?” he cried fiercely, as James came within hearing.

“What is’t?” returned the weaver eagerly.

If Thomas had been a swearing man, what a terrible oath he would have sworn in the wrath which this response of the weaver roused in his

apprehensive soul ! But Truffey was again trying to speak, and with a

“Be ashamed o’ yersel’, Jeames Johnstone,” the mason bent his ear to listen.

“They ’ll be droont. They ’ll be taen awa. They canna win oot.”

Thomas and Alec turned and stared at each other.

“The boat !” gasped Thomas.

Alec made no reply. That was a terrible water to look at. And the boat was small.

“Can ye guide it, Alec ?” said Thomas, his voice trembling, and the muscles of his face working.

The terrors of the night had returned upon Alec. Would the boat live ? Was there more than a chance ? And if she went down, was he not damned for ever ? He made no reply. He was afraid.

“Alec !” shouted Thomas, in a voice that might have been heard across the roar of the Glamour, “Will ye lat the women droon ?”

“Thomas,” answered Alec, meekly, trembling from head to foot, “gin I gang to the boddom, I gang to hell.”

“Better be damned, doin’ the will o’ God, than saved doin’ noathing !” said Thomas.

The blood shot into Alec’s face. He turned and ran.

“Thomas,” said James Johnstone, with shy interposition, laying his forefinger upon the stone-mason’s broad chest, “hae ye considered what ye ’re drivin’ the young man till?”

“Ay, weel eneuch, Jeames Johnstone. Ye ’re ane o’ thae mealy-mou’d frien’s that like a man sae weel they wad raither hae him gang wi’ his back to the pleuch, nor ca’t ’i the face o’ a cauld win’. I wad raither see my frien’ hangt nor see him deserve hangin’. Haud awa’ wi’ ye. Gin he disna gang, I ’ll gang mysel’, an’ I never was in a boat i’ my life.”

“Come awa, Thomas,” cried Alec, already across three or four ridges; “I canna carry her my lane.”

Thomas followed as fast as he could, but before he reached the barn, he met Alec and one of the farm servants, with the boat on their shoulders.

It was a short way to the water. They had her afloat in a few minutes, below the footbridge. At the edge the water was as still as a pond.

Alec seized the oars, and the men shoved him off.

“Pray, Alec,” shouted Thomas.

“I haena time. Pray yersel’,” shouted Alec in reply, and gave a stroke that shot him far towards the current. Before he reached it, he shifted his seat, and sat facing the bows. There was little

need for pulling, nor was there much fear of being overtaken by any floating mass, while there was great necessity for looking out ahead. The moment Thomas saw the boat laid hold of by the current, he turned his back to the Glamour, fell upon his knees in the grass, and cried in an agony :

“Lord, let not the curse o’ the widow and the childless be upo’ me, Thomas Crann.”

Thereafter he was silent.

Johnstone and the farm-lad ran down the river-side. Truffey had started for the bridge again, having tied up his crutch with a string. Thomas remained kneeling, with his arms stretched out as stiff as the poles of a scaffold, and the joints of his clasped fingers buried in the roots of the grass. The stone piers of the wooden bridge fell into the water with a rush, but he never heard it. The bridge floated past him bodily, but his back was towards it. Like a wretch in sanctuary, he dared not leave “the footstool of grace,” or expose himself to the inroads of the visible world around him, by even opening his eyes.

Alec did not find it so hard as he had expected to keep his boat from capsizing. But the rapidity with which the banks swept past him was frightful. The cottage lay on the other side of the Glamour, lower down, and all that he had to do for a while,

was to keep the bows of his boat down the stream. When he approached the cottage, he drew a little out of the centre of the current, which, confined within rising ground, was here fiercer than anywhere above. But out of the current he could not go; for the cottage lay between the channel of the river and the mill-race. Except for its relation, however, to the bridge behind it, which he saw crowded with anxious spectators, he would not have known where it ought to be—so much was the aspect of everything altered. He could see that the water was more than half way up the door, right at which he had resolved to send his boat. He was doubtful whether the doorway was wide enough to let it through, but he saw no other way of doing. He hoped his momentum would be sufficient to force the door open, or, better still, to carry away the posts, and give him more room. If he failed, no doubt the boat would be in danger, but he would not make any further resolutions, till action, becoming absolute, should reveal the nature of its own necessity. As he drew near his mark therefore, he resumed the seat of a rower, kept taking good aim at the door, gave a few vigorous pulls, and unshipping his oars, bent his head forward from the shock. Bang went the *Bonnie Annie*; away went door and posts; and the lintel came down on Alec's shoulders.

But I will now tell how the night had passed with Tibbie and Annie.

CHAPTER XXXI.

TIBBIE'S moaning grew gentler and less frequent, and both fell into a troubled slumber. From this Annie awoke at the sound of Tibbie's voice. She was talking in her dream.

"Dinna wauk him," she said; "dinna wauk him; he's fell (Germ. *viel*) tired and sleepy. Lat the win' blaw, lads. Do ye think He canna see whan his een are steekit. Gin the watter meddle wi' you, He'll sune lat it ken it's i' the wrang. Ye'll see 't cowerin' at 's feet like a colley-dog. I'll jist dight the weet aff o' my Lord's face.—Weel, wauk him gin ye will. *I wad raither gang to the boddom mysel'.*"

A pause followed. It was clear that she was in a dream-boat, with Jesus in the hinder part asleep upon a pillow. The sounds of the water outside had stolen through her ears and made a picture in her brain. Suddenly she cried out:

"I tellt ye sae! I tellt ye sae! Luik at it!

The jaws (*waves*) gang doon as gin they war sae mony wholpies!"

She woke with the cry—weeping.

"I thocht *I* had the sicht o' my een," she said sobbing, "and the Lord was blin' wi' sleep."

"Do you hear the watter?" said Annie.

"Wha cares for *that* watter!" she answered, in a tone of contempt. "Do ye think He canna manage *hit*!"

But there was a *jabble* in the room beside them, and Annie heard it. The water was yelping at the foot of the bed.

"The watter's i' the hoose!" cried she, in terror, and proceeded to rise.

"Lie still, bairn," said Tibbie, authoritatively. "Gin the watter be i' the hoose, there's no oot-gang. It'll be doon afore the mornin'. Lie still."

Annie lay down again, and Tibbie resumed:

"Gin we be i' the watter, the watter's i' the how o' his han'. Gin we gang to the boddom, he has only to open's fingers, an' there we are, lyin' i' the loof o' 's han', dry and warm. Lie still."

And Annie lay so still, that in a few minutes more she was asleep again. Tibbie slept too.

But Annie woke from a terrible dream—that a dead man was pursuing her, and had laid a cold hand upon her. The dream was gone, but the cold hand remained.

"Tibbie!" she cried, "the watter's i' the bed."

"What say ye, lassie?" returned Tibbie, waking up.

"The watter's i' the bed."

"Weel, lie still. We canna sweyp it oot."

The water was in the bed. And it was pitch dark. Annie, who lay at the front, stretched her arm over the side. It sunk to the elbow. In a moment more the bed beneath her was like a full sponge. She lay in silent terror, longing for the dawn.

"I'm terrible cauld," said Tibbie.

Annie tried to answer her, but the words would not leave her throat. The water rose. They were lying half-covered with it. Tibbie broke out singing. Annie had never heard her sing, and it was not very musical.

"Saviour through the desert lead us.

Without thee, we cannot go.

Are ye waukin', lassie?"

"Ay," answered Annie.

"I'm terrible cauld, an' the watter's up to my throat. I canna mov, I'm sae cauld. I didna think watter had been sae cauld."

"I'll help ye to sit up a bit. Ye'll hae dreidfu' rheumatize efter this, Tibbie," said Annie, as she

got up on her knees, and proceeded to lift Tibbie's head and shoulders, and draw her up in the bed.

But the task was beyond her strength. She could not move the helpless weight, and, in her despair, she let Tibbie's head fall back with a dull plash upon the bolster.

Seeing that all she could do was to sit and support her, she got out of bed and waded across the floor to the fireside to find her clothes. But they were gone. Chair and all had been floated away, and although she groped till she found the floating chair, she could not find the clothes. She returned to the bed, and getting behind Tibbie, lifted her head on her knees, and so sat.

An awful dreary time followed. The water crept up and up. Tibbie moaned a little, and then lay silent for a long time, drawing slow and feeble breaths. Annie was almost dead with cold.

Suddenly in the midst of the darkness Tibbie cried out,

“I see light! I see light!”

A strange sound in her throat followed, after which she was quite still. Annie's mind began to wander. Something struck her gently on the arm, and kept bobbing against her. She put out her hand to feel what it was. It was round and soft. She said to herself :

“It’s only somebody’s heid that the water’s torn aff,” and put her hand under Tibbie again.

In the morning she found it was a drowned hen.

At length she saw motion rather than light. The first of the awful dawn was on the yellow flood that filled the floor. There it lay throbbing and swirling. The light grew. She strained her eyes to see Tibbie’s face. At last she saw that the water was over her mouth, and that her face was like the face of her father in his coffin. Child as she was, she knew that Tibbie was dead. She tried notwithstanding to lift her head out of the water, but she could not. So she crept from under her, with painful effort, and stood up in the bed. The water almost reached her knees. The table was floating near the bed. She got hold of it, and scrambling on to it, sat with her legs in the water. For another long space, half dead and half asleep, she went floating about, dreaming that she was having a row in the *Bonnie Annie* with Alec and Curly. In the motions of the water, she had passed close to the window looking down the river, and Truffey had seen her.

Wide awake she started from her stupor at the terrible bang with which the door burst open. She thought the cottage was falling, and that her hour was come to follow Tibbie down the dark water.

But in shot the sharp prow of the *Bonnie Annie*, and in glided after it the stooping form of Alec Forbes. She gave one wailing cry, and forgot everything.

That cry however had not ceased before she was in Alec's arms. In another moment, wrapt in his coat and waistcoat, she was lying in the bottom of the boat.

Alec was now as cool as any hero should be, for he was doing his duty, and had told the devil to wait a bit with his damnation. He looked all about for Tibbie, and at length spied her drowned in her bed.

"So much the more chance for Annie and me!" he said. "But I wish I had been in time."

What was to be done next? Down the river he must go, and they would be upon the bridge in two moments after leaving the cottage.—He must shoot the middle arch for that was the highest. But if he escaped being dashed against the bridge before he reached the arch, and even had time to get in a straight line for it, the risk was a terrible one, with the water within a few feet of the keystone.

But when he shot the *Bonnie Annie* again through the door of the cottage, neither arch nor bridge was to be seen, and the boat went down the open river like an arrow.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A LEC, looking down the river on his way to the cottage, had not seen the wooden bridge floating after him. As he turned to row into the cottage, it went past him.

The stone bridge was full of spectators, eagerly watching the boat, for Truffey had spread the rumour of the attempt; while the report of the situation of Tibbie and Annie having reached even the Wan Water, those who had been watching it were now hurrying across to the bridge of the Glamour.

The moment Alec disappeared in the cottage, some of the spectators caught sight of the wooden bridge coming down full tilt upon them. Already fears for the safety of the stone bridge had been openly expressed, for the weight of water rushing against it was tremendous; and now that they saw this ram coming down the stream, a panic, with cries and shouts of terror, arose, and a general rush

left the bridge empty just at the moment when the floating mass struck one of the principal piers. Had the spectators remained upon it, the bridge might have stood.

But one of the crowd was too much absorbed in watching the cottage to heed the sudden commotion around him. This was Truffey, who, leaning wearily on the parapet with his broken crutch looking over it also at his side, sent his soul through his eyes to the cottage window. Even when the bridge struck the pier, and he must have felt the mass on which he stood tremble, he still kept staring at the cottage. Not till he felt the bridge begin to sway, I presume, had he a notion of his danger. Then he sprang up, and made for the street. The half of the bridge crumbled away behind him, and vanished in the seething yellow abyss.

At this moment, the first of the crowd from the Wan Water reached the bridge-foot. Amongst them came the schoolmaster. Truffey was making desperate efforts to reach the bank. His mended crutch had given way, and he was hopping wildly along. Murdoch Malison saw him, and rushed upon the falling bridge. He reached the cripple, caught him up in his strong arms, turned and was half way to the street, when with a swing and a sweep and a great splash, the remaining half of

the bridge reeled into the current and vanished. Murdoch Malison and Andrew Truffey left the world each in the other's arms.

Their bodies were never found.

A moment after the fall of the bridge, Robert Bruce, gazing with the rest at the triumphant torrent, saw the *Bonnie Annie* go darting past. Alec was in his shirt-sleeves, facing down the river, with his oars level and ready to dip. But Bruce did not see Annie in the bottom of the boat.

"I wonner hoo auld Marget is," he said to his wife the moment he reached home.

But his wife could not tell him. Then he turned to his two younger children.

"Bairns," he said, "Annie Anderson's droont. Ay, she's droont," he continued, as they stared at him with frightened faces. "The Almichty's taen vengeance upon her for her disobedience, and for brackin' the Sawbath. See what ye'll come to, bairns, gin ye tak up wi' ill loons, and dinna min' what's said to ye. *She's* come to an ill hinner-en'?"

Mrs. Bruce cried a little. Robert would have set out at once to see Margaret Anderson, but there was no possibility of crossing the Wan Water.

Fortunately for Thomas Crann, James John-

stone, who had reached the bridge just before the alarm arose, sped to the nearest side, which was that away from Glamerton. So, having seen the boat go past, with Alec still safe in it, he was able to set off with the good news for Thomas. After searching for him at the miller's and at Howglen, he found him where he had left him, still on his knees, with his hands in the grass.

"Alec's a' safe, man," he cried.

Thomas fell on his face, and he thought he was dead. But he was only giving lowlier thanks.

James took hold of him after a moment's pause. Thomas rose from the earth, put his great horny hand, as a child might, into that of the little weaver, and allowed him to lead him whither he would. He was utterly exhausted, and it was hours before he spoke.

There was no getting to Glamerton. So James took him to the miller's for shelter and help, but said nothing about how he had found him. The miller made Thomas drink a glass of whisky and get into his bed.

"I saw ye, Thamas, upo' yer knees," said he; "but I dauredna come near ye. Put in a word for me, neist time, man."

Thomas made him no reply.

Down the Glamour and down the Wan-Water, for the united streams went by the latter name,

the terrible current bore them. Nowhere could Alec find a fit place to land, till they came to a village, fortunately on the same side as Howglen, into the street of which the water flowed. He bent to his oars, got out of the current, and rowed up to the door of a public-house, whose fat kind-hearted landlady had certainly expected no guests that day. In a few minutes Annie was in a hot bath, and before an hour had passed, was asleep, breathing tranquilly. Alec got his boat into the coach-house, and hiring a horse from the landlord, rode home to his mother. She had heard only a confused story, and was getting terribly anxious about him, when he made his appearance. As soon as she learned that he had rescued Annie, and where he had left her, she had Dobbin put to the gig, and drove off to see after her neglected favourite.

From the moment the bridge fell, the flood began to subside. Tibbie's cottage did not fall, and those who entered, the next day, found her body lying in the wet bed, its face still shining with the reflex of the light which broke upon her spirit as the windows were opened for it to pass.

"She sees noo," said Thomas Crann to James Johnstone, as they walked together at her funeral. "The Lord sent that spate to wash the scales frae her een."

Mrs. Forbes brought Annie home to Howglen as soon as she was fit to be moved.

Alec went to town again, starting a week before the commencement of the session.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.



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